PARADIGM SHIFT IN EVANGELISM. A STUDY OF THE NEED FOR CONTEXTUALIZATION IN THE MISSION OF SOUTHERN BAPTISTS

by

RONALD WAYNE JOHNSON

submitted in accordance with the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY

in the subject

MISSIOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

PROMOTER: PROF W A SAAYMAN

JOINT PROMOTER: DR JN JONSSON

JUNE 1999

Statement of Candidate

Ronald Wayne Johnson

I declare that *Paradigm Shift in Evangelism. A Study of the Need For Contextualization In the Mission of Southern Baptists* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Table of Contents

Summary

This thesis addresses a needed shift of paradigm for mission and evangelism within the Southern Baptist Convention. The current model lacks appropriate contextualization in a postmodern world. The proposition of the thesis is that a kingdom model for mission and evangelism is more appropriate for Southern Baptists' commitment to mission.

The methodology of this thesis was researching primary and secondary sources, interviews with persons currently involved within the mission of Southern Baptists, evaluation of empirical data, and testing of concepts.

In Chapter One, the validity of this thesis is presented with the proposition, the limitations, the purpose, the practical nature, and the modus operandi of the thesis stated.

Chapter Two explores the problems of evangelism within the mission of Southern Baptists today. Focus is on empirical statistical evidence and the failure of assumptions, methods, and models currently in practice.

Chapter Three examines the birth of the mission and evangelism mandate of Southern Baptists and the subsequent development of a monolithic structure unchanged to the present day.

Chapter Four traces the evolution of evangelistic witness within the early church and explores the cultural dynamics of the period.

Key Terms Describing the Topic of the Dissertation

Title of Thesis:

PARADIGM SHIFT IN EVANGELISM: A NEED FOR CONTEXTUALIZATION IN THE MISSION OF SOUTHERN BAPTISTS

Key Terms:

Contextualization; Mission Strategy; Theology of Mission; Evangelism; Demographic Trends; Lifestyle Issues; Postmodernism; Reconciliation; Paradigm Shift of Mission; Kingdom Model for Mission; Ministry-Based Evangelism; Baptist History

This thesis addresses the need for substantial change related to assumptions, motifs, methods, and communication of the overall missiological imperative embraced by Southern Baptists. The thesis is proposed on the assumption that such a change is needed in order to reformulate Christian imperatives for mission and evangelism within the contemporary missiological strategy of Southern Baptists. It also takes cognizance of the fact that the original construct of the mission and evangelism mandate embraced by Southern Baptists at the founding of the Convention in its organizational meeting in Augusta, Georgia in 1845, has remained largely unchanged to the present. This limitation highlights the imperative for structural and functional change, to meet the demands of the 21st century world. Southern Baptists are slow to accept change and must learn to regard change as constructive.

The methodology adopted to structure this thesis includes researching both primary and secondary sources, interviewing contemporary scholars, evaluating present methods, assessing current data regarding evangelistic effectiveness, and taking cognizance of current trends within the missiology of Southern Baptists.

Chapter One of the thesis endorses the authenticity, the problem, the proposition, the limitations, the purpose, the practical nature, and the modus operandi of the thesis.

Chapter two explores the problems of evangelism within the mission of Southern Baptists today. Material is presented that will

not only state the problem but provide evidence of the failure of assumptions, methods, and models of current evangelism as this relates to the contemporary world. The thesis focuses on what seems to be the perpetuating denial of the failure of approaches currently in practice by pastors, denominational leadership and laity. There appears to be a reticence to address this apparent failure. Empirical statistical evidence which reflects this problem will be provided.

Chapter three examines the birth of the missions and evangelism mandate of Southern Baptists, the biblical foundation assumed, and the subsequent development of a monolithic structure largely unchanged to the present day. This chapter is necessary to understand chapter one's statement of the problem, together with Southern Baptists' missiological methodology. This is essential for an understanding of this monolithic structure, which necessitates significant changes being made.

Chapter four briefly traces an evolution of evangelistic witness within the early church and explores the cultural dynamics of that period. Developments of the early church communities are noted as the gospel proliferated from Jerusalem throughout the Roman Empire, penetrating and embracing other cultures. These insights are intended to inform Southern Baptists of the need for similar evolution of the evangelistic witness and missiological understandings in our contemporary world. Exploration into the changes of assumptions of the cultures affected, methods used as the

gospel spread, and lessons in the processes are needed to inform the trek of this thesis.

Chapter five develops the kind of philosophical and theological foundation for a contextual theology of evangelism which could be adapted within the mission of Southern Baptists. An understanding of theology is critical to Southern Baptists' ability to incorporate the gospel within the contemporary culture. Among Southern Baptists today current theological foundations, with regard to evangelism and missions, tend to provide proof texts in support of polemic and pragmatic arguments, but such proof texts are inadequate to withstand adverse testing by the culture.

Chapter six examines the shifts that have occurred in contemporary life with regard to culture, lifestyle, religious orientation, and demography. It also examines the relationship of Southern Baptist life with Southern culture, and the effect that Southern culture has had on the mission of Baptists in the South. Discussion will highlight the changes that have occurred in Southern culture since the 1960s due, in part, to the demographic boom of the Sun Belt. The apparent need for a comprehensive paradigm shift in the mission of Southern Baptists will be demonstrated.

Chapter seven examines the impact of postmodernity upon the mission of Southern Baptists. Early warning signs of the death of modernity among Southern Baptists are discussed as well as emerging trends that reflect postmodern thinking.

The literature involved in the research of this thesis covers a wide area of philosophical thought. Concepts drawn from readings and data must be applied, tested for validity of the argument of the thesis, and given coherence in such a way that the thesis can be supported. Discriminatory reading was required simply because of the proliferation of works and the need to make application to the context of Southern Baptist life. Each book or article read, and each interview conducted focuses on what is kernel to this thesis. The challenge for discovering issues and for developing assumptions and applications made in the thesis arose from the consensus of the writers with the respective contexts of the evidence seen from within the denomination.

Another part of the method of research into the problem comes from an examination of those churches within Southern Baptist life that seem to have begun the process of kingdom growth as a result of cultural dialogue. Several churches have been examined. Personal visits have been made to the churches where interviews were conducted with leadership and with church members. Further interviews have been held with persons from the larger culture who had been reached through the church's outreach. Attempts have been made to find consistency between the approaches used by the churches and the effectiveness of the respective churches in accomplishing their defined mission. A synthesis between academic research of the issues and the practical evidence has been a critical criterion in testing the concepts raised within the thesis.

Each of the chapters of the thesis focuses on the central theme that Southern Baptists must commit to effective change in the direction of their missiological approach. The focus of the chapters has been discussed earlier therefore there is no need to re-state them. The problem of the thesis has been discussed. The method is stated above.

A Definition of Terms Used in This Thesis

In order to aid the reader a selected list of words used in this thesis are defined. These definitions reflect the specialized use of some terms by Southern Baptists but include terms used in a broader field of research by most scholars. The reader should be aware that the definitions used are foundational to this thesis and that some words may reflect nuances that do not necessarily apply universally.

Words Defined

Contextualization: Within this thesis contextualization suggests an attempt to communicate the Gospel in word and deed and to establish the church in ways that make sense to people within their own local context. Contextualization attempts to present Christianity in such a way that it meets people's deepest needs and penetrates their worldview. The goal is to enable them to follow Christ without abandoning their own culture. Contextualization is an ongoing process in which the church constantly engages itself in such a way as to better understand the Lordship of Christ and what the kingdom of God is about. (Hiebert 1987:111)

Inculturation: Inculturation has been used widely among Roman Catholics. The term is based on the analogy of the incarnation of Christ in the world. The gospel therefore must be humanly incarnate

in all its applications to the specific cultures of the peoples to whom mission is addressed. (Taber 1991:174)

Missiology: Missiology is a wholistic study of missions that includes the disciplines of theology, social sciences, and the focus of effective mission strategies. (Van Rheenen 1996:137)

Mission: The term mission should not be confused in this thesis with missions. Mission reflects the work of God in reconciling humankind to God's self. It is God who has worked throughout history and God is the one who calls believers to share and participate in God's mission. **Missions** represents the plans of believers to be faithful to the commission of Christ in fulfilling God's mission as found in the New Testament.

Evangelism: Evangelism for Southern Baptists is the proclamation of the gospel of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit in order to bring lost people to repentance and faith, to a commitment to Jesus as Lord and Savior, and to bring them into the fellowship of a local church where they will be able to become more spiritually mature and will be witnesses of the gospel to other people. (Church Base Design 1986) **Evangelization** for Southern Baptists refers to the strategies and programs that are developed to accomplish the goals of evangelism as set for by the convention.

Unchurched: The term unchurched refers in Southern Baptist life to those who have no affiliation to a church or denomination of any kind. It is sometimes also used in Baptist churches to describe those who are presumed to be non-Christians. For the purposes of this thesis the unchurched will represent those who are not members of any church or faith group.

Postmodern: Postmodern refers to a shift in worldview away from the modern period. It further refers to a rejection of Enlightenment thinking and movement toward a more relativistic approach to truth as one of its characteristics. **Postmodernism** generally refers to the philosophical and intellectual study of the postmodern age. **Postmodernity** generally refers to the outlook of postmodern ideas that are shaping the culture. (Grenz 1996:12)

Praxis: Praxis as used in this thesis refers to the practice of mission and evangelism that is consistent with the purposes of God. It is not used to advocate a simple efficiency but is focused on a wholistic understanding of the outgrowth of kingdom focused mission.

Church Growth: The term church growth refers to the movement initiated by Donald McGavran and others. Southern Baptists however have used the term to refer to a more practical need for local churches to grow evangelistically and thus numerically. Southern Baptist church growth has little to do with mission but much to do

with strategies that increase the size of churches from small to larger. It also refers to the increase in the number of Southern Baptist churches. In this thesis, church growth is characterized according to McGavran, current practices in the understanding of church growth among Southern Baptists, and the need to understand church growth missiologically.

Kingdom Growth: Kingdom growth is an alternative to current understandings of church growth among Southern Baptists. It is a term that suggests the participation of churches within the purposes of God's kingdom and reign. It is a call for churches to become more incarnational, contextual, and cooperative with all believers who are participating in God's mission. It is a movement away from the corporate model of churches and denominations toward a more inclusive and pluralistic understanding of God's mission.

Chapter One

A Call For Change in the Missiology of Southern Baptists

1.1 The Validity of Pursuing This Thesis.

Southern Baptists urgently need to formulate and embrace substantial change relating to the assumptions, motivations, methods, and communication of the overall missiological imperative as it is now practiced by the majority of the churches, agencies, and leadership within the Southern Baptist Convention. Throughout the thesis, the present model of Southern Baptist mission is shown to be built on a Christendom model which is embraced by the Convention's churches. The embracing of a Christendom model, however, is a fundamental contradiction of the ideals of Baptist freedom since, for example, the Christendom model suggests that "since the time of Constantine there was a symbiotic relationship between church and state . . . ."(Bosch 1991:274) Baptists would decry such a relationship between church and state. They insist upon the separation between church and state. However, in recent years many Baptists have participated with the political establishment to attempt to enact laws favorable to the church's agenda for society. The full impact of Christendom seems to be unclear to many Baptists, yet they have consistently adopted many of the strategies of the Christendom model. The subsequent development of Christianity within toleration has produced an interdependence between social systems and the church expressed as the *corpus Christianum*. Wilbert Shenk

suggests that the clear distinction between church and world was "erased by the Constantinian process."(1991:104) Thus, for some fourteen centuries Christendom promoted the idea "that the church existed to maintain itself as an institution of society."(Shenk 1991:106)

The expanded framework suggested by Christendom has led to the present dependency of churches upon agencies. The churches employ the services of mission agencies to accomplish the task of evangelization and mission throughout the world. This is analogous to how Christian mission relied on the Empire's structures to facilitate the church's expansion, rather than assuming the responsibility of mission as a part of the local church's calling.

This call for change features within current missiological efforts in this nation, which is ineffective within the culture that most Southern Baptists find themselves relating to in daily life. It is necessary to address the problem at home because missions cannot be carried out with integrity in other cultures when lack of effectiveness is not acknowledged at home.

Southern Baptists have believed themselves to be people of kingdom vision.(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:76-77) This has included for most the understanding that a church must be on mission both at home and abroad. Historically, Southern Baptists have engaged in foreign missions as a way to accomplish the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) as they understand it. However, in recent decades a gap has emerged in terms of effectiveness and consistency between mission

at home and mission abroad. As a result Baptists have seen a rapid increase in the numbers of unchurched and unevangelized peoples just outside their church doors. In fact, there are now more than one hundred nations that have Southern Baptist missionaries at work in the cultures of those nations whose total population is smaller than the unevangelized and unchurched population in states such as Texas and California. In California alone, where there are now more than 1300 Southern Baptist churches, the Glenmary Research Center indicates that 17,174,682 persons are unaffiliated with any church body. Out of a total population in California of 29,760,021 only 12,585,339 were identified as religious adherents.(Bradley 1990:59) Phil Jones, researcher at Southern Baptist's North American Mission Board, estimates that as many as 24 million people may remain unevangelized in California. Persons included in the unevangelized category represent those who may be members of a religious group not generally associated with Christianity and thereby not considered Christian.

The South is rapidly changing as secularization increases its grip on the culture. Southern Baptist churches that have largely been insulated from traumatic demographic changes, largely due to the churched culture in the South in days past, now find themselves at risk. Estimates are that 40% of the churches in Southern Baptist life are in decline.(Hadaway 1991:16) However, more sobering estimates from the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board research department may place the number at three-fourths of the churches in decline or plateaued.

A significant indicator of the problem of evangelizing the West can be seen in the annual report of Southern Baptist foreign mission activity as reported by the International Mission Board. Across the world there are now more than 39,000 churches affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention with a total membership that exceeds four million. Baptisms reported during 1995 outside the United States totaled 287,806 or one baptism for every 14.3 members. Southern Baptists have historically used baptismal figures as an indicator of growth and health of the churches and convention. Growth of 6.7% in the number of churches was reported from 1994 to 1995. According to the *Southern Baptist Convention Book of Reports, 1996* record growth was reported in the teaching function of the churches on the foreign mission fields. (1996:176-177)

In the United States, during 1995, the number of churches was 40,120 reporting a total of 393,811 baptisms or one baptism for every 38 persons. Current membership levels exceed 15 million persons in Southern Baptist churches. However, teaching programs of the churches report general declines in nearly every area of work. Rhetoric, however, remains high. Of the fourteen priority concerns identified in 1996's annual report for Southern Baptists, engaging in worship and helping disciples grow rank in the top five. A picture of Southern Baptist commitment to evangelism at least rhetorically is found in the number one priority listed in the *Southern Baptist Convention Book of Reports, 1996;* "reaching lost persons with the gospel of Christ."(1996:55)

The fourteen concerns reflect not only the theology and ecclesiology of Southern Baptists but quietly suggest some of the problems that are within the fellowship. Traditionally high birth rates among Southern Baptists used to ensure growth from within, but trends seem also to indicate that large drop-out rates now exceed the number of people being reached in the larger secular society. Kirk Hadaway has observed that "Southern Baptists *talk* more about evangelism than they *do* evangelism."(1991:20)

The image of Southern Baptist's commitment to evangelism is due largely to the fact that evangelistic altar calls are usually part of its liturgy and the annual revival effort in most churches leads the church to believe that evangelism and mission are a priority. Hadaway says "The occasional parade of "decisions" helps Southern Baptists believe that their church is providing an effective evangelical witness to the community, and if the church is growing, the perception becomes complete and compelling."(ibid.)

The annual mission offerings continue to be promoted in Southern Baptist life with vigor. Churches will often put aside local projects or capital needs in order to meet the annual offerings for missions. Small children will often save pennies to present during mission emphasis weeks. Mission giving usually involves the whole church membership at higher levels than most any other project during the year. However, the distance between accomplishment of the number one priority among the fourteen and actual results reported by the churches each year remains a troublesome issue. Southern Baptists can no longer employ others to do missions for them at home or abroad

and fully expect the mission mandate they have always embraced to be accomplished. Evangelism done by missionaries at home and abroad will no longer ensure growth for Southern Baptists or significant penetration of the secular culture. Southern Baptists must make significant changes in the way they have approached mission and evangelism if the future is to be bright. These changes are discussed in subsequent chapters of the thesis. It is therefore the hope that this thesis will be effective in presenting the issues clearly that need to be addressed. In doing so, Southern Baptists should be able to recognize a needed shift to more appropriate models of evangelism and mission. New approaches should help contextualize the mission of Southern Baptists within cultures at home and abroad so that kingdom growth may occur. John Jonsson has observed:

> The problem of the mission perception of Southern Baptists is that Home Missions and Foreign Missions are conducted differently on the field of operation. In the "foreign" context the indigenous Christian leaders form no part of the leadership roles of the "Baptist Mission" in the area of operation. Mission and ministry have become dichotomized.(1998)

1.2 The problems posed which are addressed in this thesis.

Throughout this thesis the issue of kingdom growth lies beneath the observations. It is a term that many Southern Baptists understand rhetorically but not functionally. It is therefore being proposed as a corrective to the corporate understanding of church that many Southern Baptists embrace. A working assumption is that kingdom growth is concerned with local churches who understand their calling to be Christians on mission for effective evangelization of their

local community. Kingdom growth also implies sensitivity to God's calling in the mutuality of the gospel and networks among people from other cultures.(cf. Romans 1:11-12) According to John Jonsson:

> The unilateral movement of mission needs to be replaced by the mutuality of faith in the gospel. The gospel is ingredient to mutuality. It is not merely a commodity which is taken to people of another culture.(ibid.)

Kingdom growth ultimately engages churches in mission among other cultures and people groups within the larger scope of the world. Since Southern Baptists were founded by people of kingdom vision, the issue must continually be raised in observations that are made. (Rutledge and Tanner 1969:76-77) Kingdom growth must be engaged in an inclusive and wholistic manner. Evangelism, ministry and mission cohere in maturing disciples who themselves are able to contribute to kingdom growth. Discipleship is an assumption of the new disciple turning outward toward the world and becomes evangelists who understand the mission imperative of Jesus' commission. For too long Southern Baptists have assumed kingdom growth through the mechanisms of their programs in evangelism, discipleship and missions. They have not adequately evaluated the question as to whether biblical mission is being accomplished in the later days of the 20th century. Therefore, the problem posed in this thesis necessitates a renewal of an awareness that kingdom growth goes far beyond member recruitment, programs, money, and the routine of worship. The kingdom of God is a challenge in which each Christian must be immersed through

individual and corporate expressions of obedience to the Lord's commands.

The problem posed in this thesis reflects on an understanding of kingdom growth which necessitates the contextualization of the mission of Southern Baptists within each respective culture of the mission operation. This contextualization is not in conflict with the vision of the denomination's founders. If the churches are to engage within the cultural context it will be done by deed and word. The gospel will then have the potential of making a similar impact such as it made when it was first incarnated in the life and mission of the early disciples. It is a contextualized gospel that is able to transform a culture, preventing churches from being consigned to only a sub-cultural movement within the larger cultures that surround them.

1.3 Propositions formulated within the assumption of this thesis.

In this thesis proposals are made for Southern Baptists to function effectively within the evangelistic and missional mandates set forth at the founding of the denomination; with commitment to a missiology that takes full cognizance of the shifting worldview toward postmodernity, attractive and changing lifestyles, aware of cultural dynamics, informed by biblical and theological perceptions which enable indigenous Christians and communities of faith to engage in the inculturation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ into their own contextual world. Out of these six aspects of the proposition will come the development of the thesis.

1.4 The limitations imposed on this thesis.

There are obvious limitations to the scope of the thesis. First, the thesis will be focused entirely on Southern Baptists notwithstanding the fact that the writer's perception of the mission mandate for the church extends far beyond the parameters of Southern Baptists. This dissertation focuses on the prominence of Southern Baptists within their own culture, especially within the culture of the Southern states of the United States of America. This makes it imperative to address the issues in terms of these churches.

Secondly, the thesis must review the changing culture as a snapshot in time. Cultural dynamics are always shifting in a process which makes it impossible to address all dimensions of change. However, trends will be highlighted that will inform the general trend that is occurring within the culture with attempts to demonstrate the degree to which Southern Baptists must give recognition to those trends which contextually affect them.

Third, the thesis will initially focus on contextualizations of mission as perceived within the United States. In that the evangelization of the West is being identified as a significant challenge for the 21st century, by scholars who will be cited later, the need to address mission concerns to western mindsets needs to be highlighted. An entire thesis could be written on the contextualization of mission within other cultures and religion in other countries. Here the emphasis is on the contextualization within the pluralism which characterizes the U.S.A. in postmodernity.

A fourth reason is that Southern Baptists can hardly conduct mission with integrity in other countries while paying little or no attention to the critical changes taking place in their own culture. Southern Baptists have assumed such a vigorous posture reflecting the Christendom model with regard to mission that they have generally not addressed effectively the problems of cross-cultural, cross-fertilization and the plurality of indigenous issues at home, that are often addressed or assumed within other countries of the world.(Mead 1991:13-29)

The limitations of the thesis will focus the findings in such a way as to encourage Southern Baptists to look carefully at themselves. If Southern Baptists will carefully examine their underlying assumptions about mission and evaluate their evangelistic methods in light of socio-cultural change, they would be better equipped to translate what they have learned, making them more effective at home or abroad.

1.5 The purpose of the thesis.

The purpose of the thesis is to facilitate the need for a shift in the basic model that Southern Baptists have historically embraced in mission, namely the Christendom model, so that the gospel can impregnate this culture in which religion has been deemed to be largely irrelevant. Through careful consideration of the issues that contribute to the idea that religion is irrelevant to human life, a paradigm shift will be suggested that is evoked from research and evaluation. This will provide mission perspectives to inform leaders

in agencies and in churches a transvalued (change of fundamental presuppositions) shift of paradigm. This could hopefully result in contextualization of mission within culture, to the extent that churches become relevant witnesses within the lives of ordinary people in their socio-cultural communities.

1.6 The practical nature of the thesis.

Southern Baptists have talked consistently about mission and evangelism. Rhetoric is high, yet evidence of the dynamic of mission is sparse. Dialogue about the primary issues that contribute to the ineffectiveness and sometimes the death of churches in their socio-human context is a rare commodity. Even when issues are discussed in conferences and meetings among the leadership of the denomination, little attention is given to the need to change the foundational presuppositions related to the practice of mission and evangelism. New programs are often suggested that place a thin, re-worked veneer on the surface of old approaches.

Leaders in churches and in the denomination seem unwilling to incorporate in the planning of their strategies the substantive changes that need to occur. Much of church life, therefore, fails to go beyond contentment to enlarge the sub-culture of their churches through membership transfer or through an occasional revival when the need to do evangelism is apparent. The need for a paradigm shift suggested by the thesis may promise to draw churches out of the mire of present assumptions about the culture, and to cause them to envision mission and evangelism in more effective ways. If this can

be accomplished, a major step toward the re-vitalization of the churches in their own contextual culture could be realized. Mission and evangelism could take on new energy and new promise within the processes of such inculturations of the gospel.

The tendency for churches to re-locate, for example, in order to escape their failure properly to contextualize the gospel in certain locales, could also be avoided. White flight could be negated as churches become more reflective of the multi-racial culture in their neighborhood. The aging of the church could be corrected as younger persons are included to embrace the relevance of the church for their generation. Most importantly the mission of the church would not be kept in the "Jerusalems" of today, but would move more dynamically toward the "Athens" of today. This could occur in a discovery of a vitality analogous to the New Testament churches where pneumatic experiences in Jesus Christ became essentially inclusivistic. The underlying purpose of the thesis' argument is to address the general ineffectiveness of many Southern Baptist churches to penetrate the culture and to encourage the kind of shift of direction that could have greater salvific meaning for the communities among whom they live.

For most Southern Baptists the issue of church growth is paramount and serves as a reflector of supposed effectiveness in the penetration of the culture with the gospel. Even among churches that are in decline, the notion of a need for growth underlies their concern. Many of the problems churches face, however, with regard to growth have their genesis in an inadequate missiology. Reliance on

programs from denominational headquarters that propose to facilitate growth have proven ineffective for most declining churches. Although many SBC church growth advocates continue to point to new strategies, concern for an effective missiology is seldom addressed.

An indicator of an inadequate missiology can be seen in the way Southern Baptists have embraced the homogeneous principle as they have grown their churches. Donald McGavran was harshly criticized when he wrote that "Men like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers."(1980:223) McGavran's findings were published based upon sociological observations that human beings build barriers around their societies. Although McGavran always taught the unity of all people in Christ, he insisted that the concept was very complex.(Rainer 1993:255) Thus, McGavran urged that the gospel cross all barriers yet he insisted that cultural differences could not be ignored. McGavran wrote:

> The principle is also readily discerned when it comes to pronounced class and racial barriers. It takes no great acumen to see that when marked differences of color, stature, income, cleanliness, and education are present, men understand the Gospel better when expounded by their own kind of people. They prefer to join churches whose members look, talk, and act like themselves. (1980:227)

Although many Southern Baptists would not know of the work of Donald McGavran, they have illustrated the reality of his observations in the demographics of their churches. Most Southern Baptist churches do indeed consist of people ". . . whose members look, talk, and act like themselves."(ibid.)

Several writers have attempted to explain McGavran's underlying assumptions and have sought to focus the content of the homogenous principle in constructive ways. They have sought to avoid charges of racism, narrow-mindedness, and exclusiveness by suggesting that the principle is focused upon practical evangelistic strategies and not a theological concept of missiology. Peter Wagner illustrates by saying that "homogeneity aids the evangelistic mandate, heterogeneity aids the cultural mandate."(1981:170) In almost every case, evangelism is separated away from a missiology that seeks confront culture and to cross barriers.

McGavran recognized the potential abuse of an evangelism that sought to reach only "our kind of people" yet he continued to urge the implementation of the homogeneous unit principle for pragmatic reasons: people are more likely to become Christians if they are not required to leave their own group.(Rainer 1993:256)

René Padilla was a critic of both McGavran and Peter Wagner's advocacy of the homogeneous unit. Padilla took issue with Wagner's assertion that the spread of Christianity was accomplished among numerous homogeneous units. Wagner had argued that the gospel transcended racial, cultural, and linguistic barriers, but its spread continued along homogenous unit lines.(1979:124) Padilla recognized this aspect of the spread of the gospel but he emphasized that the breaking down of the barriers that separate people in the world was regarded as an essential aspect of the gospel, and not merely as a result of it.(1980:300) His most focused criticism was that the

theology of the homogenous unit is a ". . . missiology tailor-made for churches and institutions whose main function in society is to reinforce the status quo."(:301)

The problem is critical for Southern Baptists because the majority of their churches still reflect a historic regionalism in the face of changing cultural realities. Charles Chaney and Ron Lewis warned Southern Baptists that thousands of their churches are basically white in context and content and that the people in these churches are a great deal alike regardless of where they are located geographically.(1977:26) They further warn that these churches who become so involved in reaching their own kind are missing hundreds of "overlooked persons."(:27) While their warnings were important Chaney and Lewis did very little in the book to help Southern Baptists construct a missiology that would break away from a pre-occupation with reaching their own kind of people. In fact, *Design For Church Growth*, written to help Southern Baptist churches face the challenges of growth, is little more than a book filled with the pragmatics of evangelistic or numerical growth.

An evangelism that continues to focus on the pragmatic will not adequately confront Southern Baptists with the need to cross cultural barriers that are being erected in neighborhoods throughout the racially and culturally diverse South. The concept that homogenous units offer a pattern for mission advance is problematic for churches in the United States, however, the focus on church growth as a pragmatic process is even more problematic for global mission.

The homogeneous unit principle cannot adequately address the prospects of global mission. If for no other reason, the constant change seen in nations brought about by the information age, immigration, political unrest, and demographic shifts in population suggest that people groups are always shifting in makeup. The homogeneous principle depends upon the stability of groups that are not being impacted by such change in order for the gospel to be communicated.

The homogeneous principle also fails in global mission because its emphasis suggests that persons like to come to Christ along paths of least resistance and where the comfort level is high. Within global mission the potential vulnerable need points in the human experience can often be significant.(Jonsson 1984:2-9) If church growth is the pattern for global mission, the difficulties and liabilities of ministry among broken peoples and problematic communities could discourage serious engagement. Vulnerable need points do not ensure paths of least resistance and high comfort levels. Yet, biblical models of mission calls Christians to the brokenness of the human experience and not along paths of least resistance. The issue of church growth will continue to challenge Southern Baptists and their expectations of evangelistic results. The issue, however, must be included in serious reflection, called for in this thesis, of Southern Baptists' current missiology.

The paradigm shift called for in this thesis will be substantiated through the research and by way of noting the

observations of critics of the Southern Baptist Convention's approaches to mission and evangelism. The observations from research and from the input of scholars suggest the need for a critical look at the problems that have contributed to the trend in Southern Baptist life, thought, and action. The practical nature of the findings should help to overcome the problems suggested by the missiological trend among Southern Baptists.

CHAPTER TWO

Inadequacies Within the Current Model of Mission

2.1 Stating the problem.

The Sunday edition of the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* for February 16, 1992 asked a question. "What's Southern?" The answer was "Hospitality, Football, Robert E. Lee, Martin Luther King,Jr., Wal-Mart, and Revival Meetings."(1992:1) This headline spoke volumes about the culture in the South and the related culture of the churches. It is, however, a culture that is quickly disappearing. The demise of Blue Laws (laws that regulated to some extent the norms of the society and kept businesses closed on Sunday and liquor sales prohibited on Sunday in order to honor the Christian day of worship) was simply a first marker of the cultural shift away from a Christendom model in society.(Hauerwas and Willimon 1989:15)

Christendom, which will be explored more fully in chapter nine, refers to a synthesis forged by Emperor Constantine and his successors from 313 C.E. onward.(Mead 1991:13-29) Christendom provided for Christianity a recognition as the religion of the state, with the church functioning as the religious guardian.

According to Wilbert Shenk "Christendom, or the *corpus christianum,* thereby became indistinguishable from society. Citizenship in society was synonymous with membership in the church, and baptism was a religiopolitical rite."(1994:8) Christendom found

in the West, and especially in the United States, a fertile ground in which to flower.(Hauerwas and Willimon 1989:17) The demise in the structures that supported Christendom, as noted by Hauerwas and Willimon, continues, however, much to the dismay of Christians who have known no other model.

A plethora of books, written mostly by mainline scholars, has gone so far as to suggest that Christians, lamenting the changes in their religious culture, have become "resident aliens" in the society, caught in the vortex of change.(Hauerwas and Willimon 1989:69-92) In fact, Hauerwas and Willimon begin their book, *Resident Aliens*, by saying that somewhere between 1960 and 1980 ". . . an old, inadequately conceived world ended, and a fresh, new world began."(:15)

It is the mainline authors who seem to be the most acutely aware of the shift. They have seen their churches become victims of cultural and societal change. According to George Hunter denominations that once boasted millions of adherents across the U.S. while Southern Baptists were still fairly regional are seriously wondering now if they will still be viable in the 21st century.(1997)

Southern Baptists, while experiencing the same pressures, seem to be conducting business within the culture as if the changes are not affecting them. An example is the current focus on world-wide evangelism efforts to carry the gospel to every household by the turn of the century through a denominational emphasis called "Celebrate

Jesus." It is in substance identical to an emphasis of the 1970's called Bold Mission Thrust.

Bold Mission Thrust and Celebrate Jesus assume that Southern Baptists are capable of carrying the gospel to the entire world in a given time period. It assumes that Baptists want to accomplish the task. It also assumes that resources are in place to accomplish the task. Historically, national programs such as Good News America: God Loves You (1986) and Here's Hope: Jesus Cares for You (1990,1995) have met with disappointing results, yet Southern Baptists continue to suggest grandiose emphases they believe will challenge the average church member to be on mission in ways that are beyond the typical commitment of most Southern Baptist church members.

Researcher David Barrett has clearly shown that such bold endeavors within Southern Baptist life are little more than wishful thinking. The reality of the numbers is beyond the imagination of most church members. Barrett, for example, says that to reach every home with the gospel by the year AD 2000 would require carrying the gospel to 1,700 million homes, a number increasing by 30 million each year.(1988:46) He further states that to evangelize the 1.3 billion unevangelized in today's world would mean evangelizing 108 million each year. Barrett asks the appropriate question of Southern Baptists when he inquires "Where are the signs that anything approaching a movement of this magnitude has begun?"(ibid.)

Many young and innovative pastors are reading current scholars and are seeking out fellow pastors who have similar concerns. They

meet to discuss concerns and exchange program ideas and attend conferences offered by church consultants such as John Maxwell, Elmer Towns, Lyle Schaller, and Bill Hybels, who are calling attention to the problem.

Denominational conferences are offered in an attempt to address the problems of the churches living in the post-modern culture, however, these conferences are poorly attended on the whole. According to Georgia Baptist executive Shuford Jones, typical conferences held at denominational headquarters may draw as many as 200 pastors from within the state but in a state with many thousands of pastors the vast majority "never take part in the discussion." The seminars that tend to attract the most interest are those where a new program is being offered, according to Jones.(1998)

These programs tend to serve as temporary aids in dealing with the issues of problems in the church often brought about by larger issues in the cultural and societal shift taking place around the church. There seems to be little change in the way of engagement with the culture.

The majority of Southern Baptist churches which are small in size are inwardly focused on the demands of the local congregation, of daily ministry tasks, and of survival in the face of white flight, aging congregations, and budget demands that the energy for major change is often dissipated. William Easum in a recent article aimed at the problem of small churches illuminated the problem by saying that most of them ". . . have forgotten why they exist. They no

longer focus on mission. They turn inward and focus on themselves."(1998:4)

The problem of the thesis was made clear to the writer while serving as Evangelism Director for the Georgia Baptist Convention. No matter what church the writer visited, politically moderate, conservative, socially militant, traditional, rural, or urban, the distinct observation was that the churches are being impacted by the cultural and sociological shifts beyond their ability to cope. This is further substantiated by Georgia Baptist researcher Shuford Jones who discovered nearly 1400 Georgia Baptist churches "at risk" of significant decline or closure. (1998)

The churches that are reporting growth do not see that growth coming from the general unchurched population. In the last decade there has been no statistical change in the percentage of people reached with the gospel out of the general population.(Hendricks 1993:251) White flight in the fast growing metroplex has been for some churches a temporary reprieve. However, the growth of churches along demographic corridors has emaciated sister churches unable to cope with the programs or budgets of larger ones in appealing locations. White flight and transfer growth has been a primary growth factor in the majority of Southern Baptist congregations that report growth, not their mission program. Percentages as high as 70 to 80% of recent church growth has been the movement of Christians from one church to another.

Mega-churches are not immune to the problem of the thesis. By their own confession they often struggle to overcome the issue of regression within the congregation. An example can be seen in a large metropolitan church near Atlanta, Georgia. First Baptist Snellville was selected for review because it has remained in the top 10 churches in growth for the last five years and serves as a model church in the Convention. Since 1992, First Baptist Snellville recorded 5,500 baptisms and other additions. Yet, in the same period average Sunday School attendance grew to only 2700 out of an enrollment of 8,500. Average Sunday School attendance is often a reflector of worship attendance. Typically, those who attend Sunday School remain for worship. Clearly, First Baptist has not been successful in adding the numbers of baptized persons to its discipleship programs nor has it been able to retain the large numbers of persons already enrolled in its program. A study of its average worship and participation in discipleship programs indicates that the church is losing large numbers of persons who make faith commitments but who do not become involved in the church on a regular basis.(Jones 1997:19-22)

It is apparent from interviews conducted with church members who have dropped out of church involvement that many have grown disillusioned with the church and have turned elsewhere for spiritual needs to be met.(Hendricks 1993:124-134) A recent "man on the street" survey by Second Ponce de Leon Baptist Church of Atlanta and Pastor Jim Dennison found in eight hours of interviews only three persons

from the general population who had positive comments about the church and its effectiveness in the culture.(1998) The interviews conducted by Second Ponce de Leon echo George Barna's findings that less that one percent of the unchurched population identifies any issue of spiritual nature to be their core concern.(1995:54)

Buddy Parrish, a local church pastor said that his church had grown in numbers over recent years in part because of the influx of persons who had become disenchanted with the mega-church in the adjacent community.(1998) In his book, *Exit Interviews,* William Hendricks refers to the back door of the church as a "dark problem," one we had rather not talk about.(1993:15-23) While smaller churches around the megas fight for survival and in some cases cease to exist many more people have simply quit attending. The problem is not unique to Baptists. Researcher David Barrett has warned that 53,000 people quit church permanently each week in Europe and North America.(1982:v.) A significant comparison of the problem can be noted in illustration from the Vietnam war. Over 57,000 people were killed in the Vietnam war. The impact on the culture was devastating sparking riots and protests in the streets during the era of the 60's. However, many more persons are being lost to the kingdom of God in a single year by churches than in all the wars in which America has participated. To simply keep up with losses would require starting seven and one half mega-churches every day of the year to offset the number of people walking away from the churches

that already exist in denominations in North America and Europe.(Hendrix 1993:250)

The problem of the thesis is focused for Southern Baptists. The average age of a Southern Baptist, according to a study published by the Lilly Foundation, is now in the mid-fifties while the general population reflects a median age of 32.9 years.(1992:3-4) Southern Baptists in Georgia are confronting 56% of the state who are unchurched. Southern Baptists have used the term "unchurched" to refer to those persons who are not members of any church or denominational grouping and who do not regularly attend church services. Several counties in the state of Georgia are now 90% unchurched.(Evangelism Index 1993) Many churches, however, lament that they cannot discover prospects for their churches. This will continue to be a problem as churches seek to reach prospects who look like the general population within the churches when in reality the general population in states like Georgia is multi-cultural, multi-racial, and becoming more ethnically diverse each year.

As stated earlier in the thesis, baptismal figures (the measure of kingdom growth among Baptists) are troublesome. A general slowdown has occurred in the United States. The state of Georgia is normative for the Convention because it is the second largest state convention with over 3,400 churches and nearly 1,500,000 members. Trends in the state reflect the general problem among Southern Baptists in the nation.

From 1970 to 1980 Georgia Baptists baptized a total of 288,570 people. Total church membership in 1970 was 1,007,856. By 1980 total membership had increased to 1,124,280. From 1980 to 1990 Georgia Baptist churches baptized 278,062 people. By 1990 church membership had decreased slightly to 1,242,541. In 1994 Georgia Baptists reported a church membership increase to 1,272,190. In 1997 the total number of baptisms stood at 36,696 people. The rate of membership growth for Georgia Baptists has been slightly over 10% per decade according to the *Georgia Baptist Convention Annual Report.*(1997:315)

Comparison to the general population of Georgia is instructive. In 1970 the population was 4,587,930. In 1980 the total had increased to 5,463,105 and in 1990 to 6,478,216. Total population in 1996 was 7,200,882. United States census figures place the rate of growth in the general population at 19% per decade with Georgia now listed as third on the U.S. government list of growing states by population. Growth in Georgia Baptist churches, according to Phil Jones, occurred for the most part as Southern Baptists from other states relocated to Georgia and transferred membership to Georgia Baptist churches.(1998) It can be postulated that had it not been for transfers and the relative successes of new church starts in the state which accounted for new baptisms, Georgia Baptist church membership would have shown declines rather than slight gains. Evangelistic growth from the general population was largely not responsible for increases.

The picture is not any brighter in the overall Southern Baptist Convention numbers. Statistics collected from several years' Southern Baptist Convention Annuals indicate the declines.

From 1960 to 1970 Southern Baptists baptized 3,743,817 people. From 1970 to 1980 they baptized 3,905,502. From 1980 to 1990 baptisms stood at 3,763,655 only 19,838 over the decade of the 60's. The most telling fact is that church membership from 1960 to 1970 grew by 1,898,289 people. From 1970 to 1980 membership in Southern Baptist Convention churches grew by 1,976,928. Beginning in 1980 to 1990 membership grew by 539,323 less persons--only 1,437,605. Estimates for the decade 1990 to 2000 are placed at 1.2 million or another decline from the previous decade.(SBC Annuals 1970-1997) This number is supported by numbers from 1990 to 1995 which place the total membership gains at only 623,664. Southern Baptist churches will need more than 1,300,000 additional members from 1995 to 2000 to equal the decade of the 70's. Clearly the word *growth* in the Southern Baptist Convention cannot be used. Southern Baptists are contributing to Barrett's findings. The major contributor to growth seen thus far has not been conversion growth or kingdom growth but transfer growth from sister denominations. Insight into this problem can be gained from other data.

According to the Home Mission Board (recently re-organized and re-named the North American Mission Board), the domestic mission sending agency, in a typical year 60% of those adults who are baptized in Southern Baptist churches have already been baptized before.(Jones

1993:10) Georgia is a normative state in these statistics. If projections are made for Georgia based upon the national data it would mean that out of 13,000 adults baptized from 3,400 churches only 5,400 were first-time baptisms. The following evidence indicates the observations are true.

More than 700 churches in Georgia did not baptize a single person in 1996.(Jones 1988:58) Some 1200 churches baptized less than five and about 600 churches baptized ten or less. Even among churches in the state that average 1,000 persons in membership the average number of baptisms for a year is thirty. Aside from a few mega-churches who baptized hundreds, many of which were re-baptisms, most Georgia Baptist churches are not reaching their own children growing up in the faith. The statistics do not change appreciably from year to year. The statistics above are quite revealing when contrasted to the amount of rhetoric that surrounds evangelism in conferences and national meetings held by Southern Baptists.

A further observation that points to the problem of the thesis is that a large majority of the 5,400 first-time baptisms in Georgia Baptist churches appear to be from those who are generally religiously oriented or in some way sympathetic with the church and religion in general.(Jones 1993:15-29) It appears from a survey of religious patterns that the unchurched population, that is, those with little to no religious orientation, are not being reached.

Since 1980 there has been no growth in the proportion of the adult population that classify themselves as "born again"

Christians.(Hendricks 1993:251) This reflects the problem of the thesis in that Southern Baptist churches like sister churches in other denominations do not seem to be penetrating the secular society to the extent assumed. Many Southern Baptists long for days passed when it seemed the churches were stronger. However, this may be simply revisionist memory at work. The culture of the past was more sympathetic to organized religion in general. Today secularism is more easily recognized and easier to distinguish than when Blue Laws masked its appeal.

Loren Mead of the Alban Institute sums up the problem by drawing attention to the shift in paradigm from the early church or apostolic age to the official church age when Christendom ruled. (1991:10-20) During the apostolic age the church found itself in a hostile world. Its concept of mission was directed to the cities where churches were established and where Christians would have influence in the marketplace. Glen Hinson says of Paul that he "planted churches in towns or cities which were centers of Roman administration, of Greek civilization, of Jewish influence, and of commercial or military importance."(1981:34) Hinson also indicates that Paul's strategy was to "establish churches as centers of Christian life in two or three important places from which the knowledge of Christ might radiate."(ibid.)

Each Christian seemed to have had a sense of individual mission. Hinson stresses the importance of Christian communities but allows that the "contributions of individual Christians should not be

forgotten."(Hinson 1996:66) With the age of the official church, ushered in by the Emperor Constantine and the Edict of Milan, 313 A.D., the sense of individual mission began to be lost. Suddenly mission was "out there". It was to countries outside the Roman Empire. Over time the church began to lose a sense of mission to the marketplace once the whole empire was considered Christian. Only infidel nations needed to be evangelized. This pattern has obviously carried through to present times.

The age of Christendom still exerts significant influence among Southern Baptists today. Missions is interpreted as evangelism and has its locus elsewhere. The world that used to be "over there" has come to America, but there is great resistance on the part of most church members to be inclusive of people from outside the typical church culture of Christendom. This hypothesis was tested with the assistance of a seminary student.

A student was sent to a church in sub-urban Atlanta to attend morning worship. He was instructed to attend services but wearing clothing that might suggest poverty, uncleanliness, or dress that might suggest that he came from a lower economic class. He attended wearing faded blue jeans and a tee shirt. He also wore a baseball cap on his head. He entered the building and was met by older persons in suits and ties who did not acknowledge his presence by handshake or greeting. He stood at the entrance to the sanctuary with no one assisting him. He went inside and sat on a back pew between two persons dressed in Sunday apparel. One person picked a card from the

pew and handed it to the student without saying a word. It was a visitors card. The student filled in the card and placed it in the offering plate. He was not contacted by the church at all even though he had asked to be contacted by checking the appropriate boxes on the card. His worship experience had been a lonely one with no one acknowledging his presence and with no follow-up. Though many churches insist they are open to all who will attend, clearly the membership remains in many cases uncomfortable when persons attend who do not follow the rules of accepted cultural expression from within the church.

Southern Baptist churches, denominational structures, and ministries still focus mission as external to home and local community contexts. By a formula established by the Convention nearly twice the money given by the average Baptist is allocated to do missions outside the local context. This fact is substantiated by the report of the two mission boards allocation of funds from the churches. According to the *Southern Baptist Convention Book of Reports, 1998,* in 1998-99, $77,502,862 was given for foreign missions while $35,325,804 was given to home and local missions.(1998:44) Part of the problem can be attributed to the lack of an effective definition of mission in the minds of most Southern Baptist church members. Mission is viewed through the lens of how much money is sent to the SBC for mission causes, whatever they may be. Church members are seldom clear about the intended use of the money since most never attend the annual meeting where reports of the expenditures are published.

Recently, *The Christian Index*, the Georgia Baptist Convention's newspaper, featured the executive secretary signing a check for 6.5 million dollars. The headline read: "Millions for Missions". The story boasted of a record amount given for the annual mission offering and the Cooperative Program. It was given for missions, but mission was never defined. The average church member would find it difficult to explain how the money would be used. Broad generalizations of sharing the gospel, supporting the missionaries, and helping people are phrases most often used to explain what mission is about among Baptists. The problem can be seen in students who attend seminary. Recently in a missions class the writer asked the class to define missions as practiced by Southern Baptists. Students gave definitions that supported the Christendom idea and spoke of money sent to support missionaries. They could not adequately explain what the mission of Southern Baptists is to accomplish either at home or abroad. The generalization of carrying the gospel to unbelievers was most often cited as the proper definition.

The problem is further complicated since most church members do not adequately conceptualize mission as needing to be done in the United States to quite the degree that it needs to be done abroad. However, as Lesslie Newbigin has pointed out, the West is the most challenging mission field we will face in the 21st century.(1997) Newbigin's observations are echoed by the experience of a Massachusetts executive.

Dan McMillian, CEO of a major publishing firm, said to a group of Southern Baptists that he did not know how to be a Christian. "You see, here on Beacon Hill (an affluent residential area of Boston), no one knows how to be a Christian. It is not in our vocabulary. You Christians must help me know how to be a Christian" (1989). His words summed up the need in Western culture today. Mission will need to include ways to teach not only people on Beacon Hill what it means to be a Christian but also what it means to be Christian among those living in the smallest hamlets in rural parts of the country. It simply cannot be assumed that the larger culture knows or appreciates what Christianity is about today.

Christians seem to be facing the reality of being a sub-culture within the larger culture, just as the early Christians. This has not always been the case in the United States where assumptions about Christianity were often applied to the general culture's norms in years passed. On a typical Sunday morning there are millions of people shopping and engaging in ordinary pursuits instead of attending church. David Wells has indicated that religious commitment in terms of church attendance points to the misconception of an America that is concerned about formal religion. He says that "only 25 percent of the Americans who claim to be born again are in fact religiously committed."(1994:18) Wells further states that the refinement of those who claim to be born again factored against the larger population yields only 8 percent of the population who are committed

to church attendance. These, he says, are seriously hobbled by their entanglement with modern culture.(ibid.)

Church members are religious but many are not moving very far beyond the rhetorical entertainment that keeps most pastors digging for creative illustrations and entertaining stories to keep the congregation's attention long enough to apply the gospel. Evangelistic exhortations from the pulpit do not motivate most church members to be evangelistic in their daily lifestyle. Research has indicated that less than one-half of one percent of church members ever share their faith with another person during the course of a year.(Whitten 1991:8-9) Many church members seem unable to translate faith concepts studied on Sunday into daily mission on Monday. George Barna has indicated that Americans do not know the Bible. Fifty-eight percent did not know who preached the Sermon on the Mount.(1990:118) It is entirely possible that many church members do not know either.

On a nationally syndicated Atlanta talk show, the host was embarrassed when asked the trivia question "What is the last book of the Bible?" He responded to the person asking the question, "I'm sorry, I just do not know." What is interesting is that this show's host is widely known for his God, faith, home, and country rhetoric. It is also interesting to note that his listeners are reflective of older persons in the culture, a problem that had his show canceled recently on a station that shifted its appeal to those aged thirty and younger. The reality that the talk show host would embrace religious

values even without knowing much about the Bible, is another indicator of the Christendom issue.

But that is not true of the larger culture. The prevailing attitude today in what Alfred C. Krass has called, "neo-pagan America," is a consensus that God is unnecessary.(Krass 1982:118-133) In subtle ways our culture chants, "you do not need God." God is the forgotten one, on the sidelines of everyday life for multiplied millions. If the problem of the thesis is to be overcome it will take a major paradigm shift in terms of how the gospel is contextualized into a post modern society. Mission will need to be re-discovered within the context of Southern Baptist life. Mission will need to be addressed to the extent that its effectiveness is no longer assumed as simply the natural expression of the people called Southern Baptists.

2.2 Failure of Assumptions, Methods, and Models.

Voices are calling for change. More and more articles are appearing in state Baptist papers and other publications that suggest Baptists are not in the best of health. In his "Thinking Out Loud" column, appearing in the Virginia Baptist state paper, Denton Lotz, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance boldly asked "Is there a future for Baptists?"(1998: 8-10) These questions would hardly have been conceived of during the 1950's, 60's, or 70's among Baptists in the South. But today they are uncomfortable, often explained away, or ignored by many. Lotz suggested problems with leadership and spirituality, theological tensions, and the radical shift in

denominationalism and its requirements upon the movement of Baptists worldwide. It was a call for persons who could lead spiritually in the next generation, a plea for renewal to dead and dying churches, and for vision in the 21st century.

In the month of January the Kentucky state paper wrestled in its editorial pages with issues Kentucky Baptists face in 1998. Four out of five issues named in the paper addressed controversy, failure, and decline.(1998:5) Hope was invested in a new executive director who would bring to the state of Kentucky the vision required to challenge the churches and resolve problems faced by the state convention. Against the backdrop of these two papers, randomly selected during the month of January, the Georgia state paper carried glowing stories in its February issue of money given to missions, of the Georgia Baptist evangelism conference held in the state and filled with fundamentalist rhetoric, and the lead story of the next SBC presidential nominee. The attitude of this paper contrasts greatly with the other papers cited above.

What is striking about the February issue of the Georgia paper are the comments made by Paige Patterson, the official candidate for president chosen by the SBC leadership. His comments betray the underlying problems in the assumption of the mission of Southern Baptists and alluded to in two of the papers mentioned above. Patterson said that his two major objectives would be to work with the churches and the North American Mission Board ". . . to baptize 500,000 people during the year 2000. Second, I want to do all I can

to assist the International Mission Board in getting our arms around the globe with a comprehensive program of evangelism and discipleship."(1998:2) The candidate's statements were made against the backdrop of other comments made in the article affirming the Convention's return to biblical inerrancy and commitment to the Word of God. The typical religious rhetoric that many Baptists approve of flowed through the article. It is the kind of rhetoric that keeps some Baptists from fully facing the declines of the Convention and its churches in the face of the secular world. It is also the kind of rhetoric that will guarantee the candidate election because of his fervor and use of rhetoric that Baptists, especially many in the World War II generation, long to hear. The assumptions that are failing Baptists with regard to mission and evangelism have been identified for purposes of the thesis as four cornerstones. These four critical issues are not exclusive of the issues that need to be mentioned or in any way serve as an exhaustive treatment, however, these cornerstones represent problems that are hypothesized as instructional in an understanding of the problem.

2.3 Four critical Issues.

The first cornerstone or critical issue is based on the commonly held idea put forth by conservative leaders that Baptists need to return to an unquestioned Biblical inerrancy if the mission of Baptists is to be accomplished. Baptists, however, should take notice of the full impact of inerrancy among fundamentalists. It is beyond

the scope of this thesis to fully explore inerrancy, however, some note of its impact should be made.

Inerrancy in the course of church history is a rather recent development that helped to shape twentieth-century evangelicalism. Historian George Marsden identifies fundamentalism as primarily a religious movement among American evangelical Christians who had complete confidence in the Bible and were preoccupied with the message of salvation to sinners.(1980:3)

Fundamentalists of the late 19th and early 20th century found themselves living in a culture that they believed was turning away from God. According to Marsden they shared the belief that modernism and the theory of evolution had caused the catastrophic decline of spirituality within the culture by undermining the Biblical foundations of American civilization.(ibid.)

Spokespersons such as James M. Gray of the Moody Bible Institute, William Jennings Bryan, Billy Sunday, and J. Gresham Machen were militant in their crusade against modernism and its associated theory of evolution. Fundamentalists such as Gray, Bryan, Machen and Billy Sunday were evangelical Christians close to the American revivalist establishment of the 19th century who opposed the cultural changes that modernism endorsed.(:4)

Bible institutes, conferences on Biblical prophecy and teachings about the millenium, especially dispensational premillennialism, worked together to argue the case for fundamentalism. Princeton Theological Seminary served as an important theological center for

fundamentalism. Marsden says that the idea of inerrancy taught by Presbyterians at Princeton became a newly defined dogma for fundamentalists.(:5)

According to Marsden inerrancy became a code word for much of the fundamentalist movement. It had a scientific quality that was related to the view of truth as directly apprehended facts. Inerrantists considered that truth was absolutely reliable and precise.(:57)

Fundamentalism took on wider roots that were cultural as well as theological and organizational. Baptists were involved in the widening scope of fundamentalism. J. Frank Norris, a Baptist pastor, led in the fight against the liberals within the Convention.

Beginning as early as 1922, J. Frank Norris, the pastor of First Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, wrote "That thing you call the denomination, that machine, . . . destroys the initiative of the individual and makes him a cog in the wheel . . . it's wholly contrary to the New Testament."(*Search Light* 1922) Bill Leonard says that "ten years later, T.T. Martin, one of the Southern Baptist Convention's best-known evangelists, wrote that "Pastor J.Frank Norris and those lining up with him are now organizing 'Fundamentalist' Baptist churches in different cities, and it is spreading."(1990:viii) It did indeed spread. By 1979 the conservatives continued what J. Frank Norris had begun as they pushed the convention toward issues of Biblical inerrancy, suspicion of seminary teachers, right-wing politics, and a staunch refusal to let women serve as pastors in local

churches. As a result the ethos of the Southern Baptist Convention changed radically.

Citing liberalism as the source of the problem conservative leaders in the SBC railed against the SBC seminaries, agencies, and liberal pastors during the decade of the 80's as the infection that had crippled SBC mission efforts.

The controversy undermined not only agencies, seminaries, and churches but also personalities. In 1979, a fundamentalist faction implemented certain political methods that eventuated in the takeover of the boards and agencies of the convention. Leonard has said that the faction with its name calling, divisions among leaders, and distrust has "like no other previous debate in SBC history . . . left the denomination disoriented in its mission and uncertain about its future."(1990:x) Since 1979 every election in the national convention has been decidedly political in nature. Every agency has conducted its business against the backdrop of political ramifications. No one knew in 1979 how much energy would be wasted over the next ten years fighting controversy within the convention. Moderates have given up the fight and have placed their hopes on their own organization which is called the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Although they refuse to form another convention, they conduct their business and their mission program as a body entirely separate from the Southern Baptist Convention. Although the takeover is complete, small skirmishes still break out from time to time. Most of these are around the rhetoric as one conservative leader is favored over another. Elected offices in

the convention are pursued with vigor by those who wish to keep the convention in a conservative position.

In an article in the *Christian Index*, Pastor James Merritt, charged with nominating the next SBC president, said that he was indebted to the candidate for helping guide the Southern Baptist Convention ". . . back to its biblical roots and evangelical heritage."(1998:2) If there is anything that is clear it is that the conservative takeover of the SBC during the last 15 years has fueled the rhetoric for missions and evangelism.

A significant number of Baptist leaders now believe that missions and evangelism can be accomplished worldwide because of a renewed belief in inerrancy and re-investment in what they have called the SBC's evangelical heritage. The belief of the conservative leaders seems to be that theological purity, as they define it, is the needed cornerstone toward accomplishing the challenge of the Great Commission mandate. The assumption is problematic for a variety of reasons. The most obvious problem is the assumption that all Baptists and the larger culture can and will embrace the narrow theological principles set forth by the leadership of the SBC. Those who cannot accept inerrancy find themselves left out of the mainstream of thought. Even those who embrace a strong missiological and evangelistic rhetoric but who do not classify themselves as inerrantists feel alienated from brothers and sisters who are evangelistic and who embrace the fundamentalist rhetoric. The assumption seems also to suggest that to get the theology correct, by

their definition, is to get the message right. The assumption that missions and evangelism cannot be accomplished without a commitment to inerrancy and conservative Baptist ideology may serve to actually limit the number of persons who can be involved in mission and cause a number of persons to look elsewhere for a free and open expression of their personal zeal for missions and evangelism. There is some evidence now that this is happening as mission candidates are grilled by the mission sending agencies as to their views on inerrancy, abortion, homosexuality, the role of women in ministry, and a variety of other issues. Indeed, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an alternate Baptist group, exists today as a body of Baptists who have reacted against such overbearing rhetoric and imposed theological position. A final problem with the assumption that doctrinal purity will reinvigorate the Convention is that such a notion is compatable with a modern outlook. This is problematic given the shift of worldview toward postmodernism in the culture.

A second critical issue or cornerstone has to do with how the gospel is modeled as communication to unbelievers. Recently, the Georgia Baptist state evangelism conference attracted a large crowd of Baptist leaders and preachers to a two day preaching conference on evangelism. Evangelistic rhetoric was at a peak. The conference was dominated by leading conservative pastors from across Georgia and the Southern Baptist Convention. Selected highlights from the sermons of these pastors were printed as an insert in the Georgia Baptist state newspaper. A sampling of these highlights is included below:

"It's a great thing when the church is in the world. It's a defeated thing when the world is in the church."(1998:2)

"Our conduct either commends or discounts the gospel that we share with a lost world. The greatest testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a changed life."

"Every day I try to tell someone about Jesus Christ. You can't start in a witnessing experience where you are. You have to start where they, the lost people are."

"The one thing that interested Jesus Christ more than anything else while he was on this earth was the harvest. The one thing that motivated Jesus Christ to leave those ivory palaces and come to this world of woe was the harvest. If your theology does not motivate you to be a soul-winner, it is defective theology. Jesus was in the soul-business. There's no business like soul-business."

Summing up the conference the executive director of the Georgia Baptist Convention said that when he saw the crowd and felt the electricity in the air ". . . I wanted to shout for joy!"(ibid.) These examples of evangelistic rhetoric point to the second cornerstone that evangelistic preaching is primary to the accomplishment of mission among Southern Baptists. Exuberance over this kind of preaching is equated with zeal for action. As Evangelism Director for Georgia Baptists for three years the writer noticed something very disturbing. While it is true that these conferences provide a time of motivation and excitement and challenge for pastors and leaders who attend, the reality is that few if any results come

directly from such an event. There is no evidence that these conferences provide any significant change in the attendee's own personal lifestyle with regard to sharing the gospel with unevangelized persons or that the churches are any more effective evangelistically in the culture as a result of two days of evangelistic preaching. The writer interviewed, in 1994, (during de-briefing sessions) 100 pastors who had come to the evangelism conference during his tenure and found that they enjoyed the conference, received several helpful sermon illustrations but witnessed no significant change in their churches as a result of their attendance at the event or as a result of preaching the same messages they heard at the event back in their home churches.

The model of communicating with unbelievers held up at these conferences is one of monological, direct confrontation of the gospel to the culture. It communicates that rhetorical passion for the gospel is the needed element in the witness of Christians to unbelievers. Presenting Christ to unbelievers is assumed to be an exercise that can be done with little regard to the unbeliever's own personal faith journey or experience. The message that is communicated is if the witness has passion, he will be enabled by the Holy Spirit to be effective. However, these assumptions ignore the realities of how people listen to gospel sales pitches, the suspicious nature of secular people regarding those who witness to them, and the deductive nature of the communication in a culture that is

increasingly inductive and relativistic. More will be said about these issues in pages that follow.

A third cornerstone or critical issue in the assumption that Baptists make regarding mission and evangelism is that people in the culture are religiously oriented in much the same way Baptists are. Southern Baptists have labored under the assumption that people today need what they have to offer. In his presidential address at the Southern Baptist Convention of 1992, Morris Chapman exhorted the messengers of the convention to take what he called the "high ground" of witness. Saying that the soul of the nation was in peril, Chapman challenged Baptists to be on mission:

> To those lost and without hope, Southern Baptists have a word of witness concerning Jesus Christ. To families devastated by brokenness, Southern Baptists have a word of healing and wholeness. To individuals whose lives have been ruined by the reign of immorality and situation ethics, Southern Baptists have a word concerning God's law and God's grace.(1992:99)

Chapman's speech was filled with examples of how Southern Baptists had led the nation in mission outreach. Yet, his message stands in sharp contrast to the culture. The assumption that the culture wants to receive the gospel message of Baptists on mission cannot be embraced without question. Chapman's assumptions about the mission and evangelistic zeal of Southern Baptists ignores the reality of the secularization of the culture since World War II. The withdrawal of whole areas of life and thought from the Church's influence must be confronted. George G. Hunter, III has pointed out that the church enjoys less and less of a home field advantage:

> Consequently, we observed an increasing number of "secular people"-who have navigated their whole lives

> beyond the serious influence of Christian churches. They have little or no Christian memory, background, or vocabulary. Many of them do not even know what we are talking about, and have little or no experience of "church."(1996:20)

The increasing secularism of the United States makes it increasingly difficult to assume the kind of religious orientation that values the principles that Chapman suggests.(Hunter 1996:20) Reality is that families are indeed broken, as Chapman suggests, but families facing brokenness within the culture do not generally seek the church's advice or resources to mend family problems. Family therapists today have built an industry to deal with America's broken homes. George G. Hunter, III indicates that people are ". . . trusting science, or medicine, or therapy, or education, or drugs, or some guru, or a "self-help" book, or seminar to meet their needs."(1996:19) He goes on to say that people are just as likely to look outside the Christian tradition as inside it for the spiritual help they need.(:20)

The reign of immorality and situation ethics seems not to be the prevailing concern of many in the culture. An example can be seen in the alleged moral scandal in the presidency of Bill Clinton. While religious leaders and conservatives on radio talk shows bombard the culture with rhetoric decrying immoral behaviour, the popularity rating of the president at the time of this writing remains at an all time high. "President Clinton's public approval rating remains strong, apparently unaffected by Senate hearings . . . Clinton enjoys a 61 percent approval rating . . . ."(Reuters 1997) People seem to be more

concerned with their individual lives and the economy, not issues of immorality in the White House. The assumption that the culture is motivated by, convinced by or recognizes the same concerns as Southern Baptists with regard to family issues, personal ethics, and morality cannot be supported by the evidence of public opinion polls, patterns of behaviour, and attitudes in the general public.

When Southern Baptists launch into the culture expecting others to be motivated from within the same religious orientation as they are, an assumption has been made that the religious training and upbringing of people in the culture parallels their own. However, this is not the case today. If anything, there is a lack of religious training in the nation's upbringing:

> In 1952, 6 percent of the American adults in Gallup's random sample reported they had no religious training. The figure in 1965 was 9 percent. In 1978 it was 17 percent. While the graph fluctuates somewhat since 1978, its direction continues. We can now infer that, by the turn of the century, a third of all teenagers and adult Americans will have no religious training in their background.(Hunter 1996:20)

As Hunter has pointed out in citing the Gallup poll's research, the culture is losing its religious memory. To continue to assume that a kind of religious altzheimerism is not occurring in the culture is to set up more and more churches for failure as they attempt to communicate the evangel to the culture. The result of the emphasis that Baptists place on evangelism has caused them to fall into the trap of pitching their message ". . . exclusively to the people with a inborn capacity for believing while ignoring the other half of the population, who find believing difficult."(Adams 1994:21) It should

be quite clear that as they are related to the culture, Southern Baptist churches are not the lead partner in a dance with the culture.

A fourth critical issue in the missiological assumptions made by Southern Baptists as they attempt to fulfill their understanding of mission is that mission and evangelism is adequate reason for and will therefore lead to growth in the churches. This assumption has been a major cornerstone among Baptists in the South and has generally identified church growth as a direct result of their evangelism and mission efforts. As a conservative denomination Southern Baptists have been committed to growth. For them a church that is not growing is one that is failing in its mission. Growth represents success in efforts to evangelize and congregationalize. (Hadaway 1991:11) Many church growth experts have listed evangelism as a major factor in the growth of churches. However, determining the extent to which evangelism contributes to growth is a problem. Little research has been done among Southern Baptists that would sustain their argument that evangelism contributes to growth among them. As has been previously stated, the denomination is not keeping pace with the culture as it grows. This is due to the large numbers that are counted as growth but that are in reality simply transfers of membership and re-baptisms.(Jones 1993:7-15) What is troublesome is that leaders are not making any distinction between those being reached with the gospel from the secular culture and those who are simply moving from church to church or being re-baptized often due to the failure of adequate discipleship.

Southern Baptists often report that they are involved in evangelism and missions in order for their churches to experience growth. It is a part of the culture of expectation among Southern Baptists. The relationship between church growth and evangelistic recruitment is a universal presupposition among Southern Baptists. In fact, Southern Baptist churches will often report strong outreach activities on behalf of its members even when the evidence is not present to demonstrate such activity. In interviews with more than 100 churches responses from the membership indicates two-thirds of the membership typically believes that their church is growing due to evangelistic activity and because of their concern for persons in the culture.

Kirk Hadaway supports this data in a study of growing churches and denominations. He reports in his study of growing churches:

> Survey results showed that 70 percent of growing metropolitan Southern Baptist churches reported that their members were extensively or moderately involved in recruitment (as compared to only 45 percent in the Presbyterian study). In the Southern Baptist Convention, 41 percent of plateaued churches and 39 percent of declining churches also reported extensive or moderate involvement in recruitment.(1991:16)

Such activity is part of Southern Baptist heritage and factors strongly in the basic assumptions made about growth. This is seen in the evidence cited above where churches in decline also reported extensive or moderate involvement in recruitment or outreach which is another word Baptists use to describe evangelistic activity. Reality suggests that Baptists have grown their churches in the past not because of the effectiveness of their evangelistic activity but

because they have generally had a high birth rate and have held on to their youth longer than many of the mainline Protestant denominations. Hadaway explains that despite misleading statistics which suggest SBC churches gain more members from outside than they lose, the primary source of growth for them has been ". . . the addition of children of existing church members . . . ."(1991:19)

Southern Baptists today will be forced to take another look at the issue of growth and their supposition that their growth has come from missiological and evangelistic involvement. Trends in families will make it harder for Baptists to depend on high birth rates for growth. Baptists who used to be largely a blue-collar constituency have become increasingly white-collar in the urban culture. Hadaway may have sounded a warning about the SBC's assumptive stance with regard to growth by saying that without a high birth rate and high rate of retention Baptists would certainly expect to see decline as more and more Baptists slip into secularism and into other denominations.(1991:20)

Even the resurgent conservative theological rhetoric that Baptists have been embroiled within during the last two decades betrays the false assumptions that have been foundational about growth. The turmoil among Southern Baptist churches where moderates and conservatives do battle over the Bible is probably nothing more than a sign of the tension faced as the numbers come in about the growth of the churches. Loren Mead suspects that the battle ". . . may be as much sparked by slow growth (blue-collar Baptists of a

generation ago have become white-collar Baptists with lower birth rates today) as by theological orthodoxies."(1993:24)

Southern Baptists must soberly face many other issues, but these four critical issues are especially troublesome. They have served as cornerstones of assumption regarding Baptist mission and evangelistic zeal but they are now failing as the culture shifts. Failure to examine the assumptions and to question them may lead to nothing more than an increased rhetoric around the issue of mission and evangelism rather than determined strategies focused on effective ways to reach the culture with the gospel.

2.4 Failure of method and model.

The failure of methods and models of evangelistic and missiological activity is also troublesome. These methods and models did not always present the potential of failure. In fact, they were quite effective in the early days of the mission of Southern Baptists. However, the failure today is largely due to the fact that these methods and models have not shifted to meet the changing culture. Although Southern Baptists have been a leading missions-sending denomination throughout the world in the early to mid-20th century, the dawning of the 21st century questions whether or not that leadership can be maintained. A few leaders are beginning to write of the challenge that the 21st century will present to Southern Baptists and of the shift away from mission-sending denominations to a more

localized sense of mission. Laurie Lattimore reported in an interview:

> Noting that the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program design was born out of the industrial age, Bill O'Brien said churches and individuals no longer need agencies and institutions to be their link to the rest of the world. In today's global society, agencies are more often a cumbersome middleman.(1998:8)

The question arises as to whether or not the ethos of Southern Baptist concern for mission can be sustained in the face of the fragmentation of programs, denominational structures, cultural shifts, and entreprenaural mission activity on the part of churches who break away from the denominational paradigm.

Chapter three outlines the history of the evangelistic method and model of Southern Baptists and its tie to missions that was largely effective for its time. Chapter two will demonstrate, however, through its historical survey that the methods and models now being used are more like those used in the 19th century than those used in the 20th century. Southern Baptists have been a highly pragmatic denomination. From its early days methods that were found to be effective in a few churches were improved upon by denominational leaders and these models for mission and evangelism were franchised to the broader array of SBC churches to implement. The methods and models designed from denominational headquarters were passed along to the churches in much the same way that government programs are passed today to the states from Washington, D.C. James Sullivan wrote to encourage such a system by saying that Baptists were connected by a rope of sand with strength of steel.(1974:67-78) The granules of sand

represented individual churches, separate from one another but all flowing cooperatively together in a strong rope of mission that wrapped around the world. The strength of steel was demonstrated in the cooperative effort that individual churches made to function together for a common mission. Until the 1980's this rope was intact. But controversy severed the rope and the grains of sand have scattered for many. Yet the perception of a rope of sand still remains throughout the SBC infrastructure. However, this issue is not without debate today.

Keith Parks has suggested from his position as missions leader in the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, a moderate Baptist group, that "There is no question there is a marked shift away from the agency . . . ." But Parks' comments are rebutted by Jerry Rankin mission leader of the conservative SBC International Mission Board. Rankin suggests that Sullivan's description is still in place. He said that "Most of our churches realize they're able to send missionaries only if they do it cooperatively."(1998:8) Parks' comments seem to indicate a recognition that churches are moving away from cooperation to more responsibility for their own calling to mission while Rankin's comments suggest churches are not capable of embracing individual responsibility for missions without working together to send money and missionaries through agencies. However, Bill O'Brien, director of the Global Center for Mission at Samford University suggests "Missions are bypassing the agencies and having much more contact through the local church."(:8) Clearly, no agreement is to be found within Southern

Baptist circles of leadership as to the future of mission sending agencies and the participation of local churches. Many are suggesting that the future of missions is not to be found in sending agencies but in the whole church reaching the whole world without depending on money raised for others to accomplish the task that has been given to all the people of God within the church.

The problems of moving away from the current paradigm is complicated by the memories of successes among Southern Baptist churches. In the 1950's, the decade when Southern Baptists experienced their greatest numerical increases, almost every Southern Baptist church looked alike. In terms of program every church insisted upon having a Sunday School, which used the literature produced by the SBC's publishing house and a program of training leaders on Sunday evenings. There were programs for men (the Brotherhood program) and women (the Woman's Missionary Union). These programs taught missions awareness. There were programs for the children. The Royal Ambassadors for boys and the Girls in Action provided missions study for children. These programs were modeled after the Boy Scout and Girl Scout programs. At every level of church life a mirror image could be found in the next town's Baptist church. In fact, it was not at all uncommon for persons on vacation to pay a visit to the local Baptist church in an area and to feel they had not "missed church". Lapel pins were given for faithful Sunday School attendance. Many persons prided themselves for years of perfect attendance in Sunday School. But what happened when a person went on

vacation and could not attend her local church? How could a person count a missed Sunday toward perfect attendance? The answer for Baptists in the South was simple. She would simply attend Sunday School in the town she was visiting and be credited back home in her local church for having attended every Sunday of the year without missing Sunday School. As was often the case, the content of the Sunday School lesson was kept in sequence for her since the church she was visiting was using the same literature on the same cycle as her home church. She would not miss a single lesson or a single Sunday's attendance.

This method of Christian education extended to the mission activities and to the revival season. Churches went on mission trips together and held evangelistic services in the Fall and Spring each year. The tightly developed cooperative program of Southern Baptist churches proved effective for Southern Baptists and was as easy to service from denominational headquarters with methods and models that worked as any fast food chain of restaurants in the culture today services its franchises with foods that are just alike from city to city.

Many of today's Southern Baptist churches have grown tired of franchised methods and models handed down from headquarters. They have found the programs to be ineffective. Churches are now shopping in a variety of places for methods and models that will work. As a result all of the denominational agencies have had to downsize staff because of the sharp declines in sales of products and services. David

Wells indicates that one of the many signs of ebbing vitality in denominations is in the decline of sales of products such as religious periodicals.(1994:22)

The re-organization of the Home Mission Board to the North American Mission Board reflects the problem. Approximately 45 employees were asked to resign and given severance pay in 1997 because of staff reduction goals set by the agency. Citing financial efficiencies brought about by restructuring and personnel cuts the board reported in its *Book of Reports* that it now had funds "that would not have been available before restructuring."(1998:59-60) This trend will continue among Southern Baptist agencies and churches that are struggling with decline. Many churches and agencies are searching to find what will work in the culture. The trouble is that these churches are still thinking in terms of program, method and model. The 1998 Southern Baptist Convention Annual lists a variety of new programs and resources among the re-structured agencies. Optimism for the future is reflected in the promise of the new structures. The report of the North American Mission Board promises in the *Book of Reports:*

> As we look toward the future of this new agency, we pledge to hold high the banner of personal witness, ministry with the intent to witness, and the resources to equip Christians and churches to be "on mission" as a great soul-winning army.(1998:118)

Not everyone, however, shares the enthusiasm for the new structures and efforts of Southern Baptists. Tony Campolo, in an article in the *Alabama Baptist*, has quipped "When it comes to missions, if the 1950s

come back, then Southern Baptists will be ready."(1998:8) The answer for Southern Baptists may not rest in overhaul of its agencies. What is called for is a paradigm shift that will move Southern Baptists to the edge of the culture where innovation occurs and concerted efforts to seek to properly contextualize mission within the emerging culture.

A review of the history of Southern Baptist programs of missions and evangelism will provide a perspective for understanding the problem addressed by this thesis.

Chapter Three

Historical Perspectivess of Southern Baptist Mission

3.1 Historical Perspective.

In order to understand adequately the lens through which the problem of the thesis is viewed it will be necessary to examine an historical perspective that many Southern Baptists embrace with regard to their understanding of mission and evangelism. Much of the history will be seen in terms of the agencies and leadership of the Convention due to the fact that Baptists in the South embraced very early in their history a connectional model to further their missiological concerns. This connectional model, which appertains to church-relatedness, while embraced by many, faced significant difficulties in an era of strong anti-missionary bias and growing individualism within the nation.

Leon McBeth has indicated that not all Baptists shared the zeal for missions which led the majority of them to form the missions and tract societies that flourished in the early 1800s.(1987:371) William Warren Sweet points out that by the 1820s there were articulate spokesmen who sought to undermine missions. Sweet says "what began as scattered dissent mushroomed into a full-fledged anti-mission movement." The basis of their argument against missions was that conversion was God's task alone and that "mission societies and conventions were mere human inventions, and that missionaries were mostly hirelings."(ibid.)

Spokespersons such as Daniel Parker, John Taylor, Joshua Lawrence, and Alexander Campbell were formidable enemies of mission on the frontier. Parker, a hyperpredestinarian "totally rejected all human instrumentality in the work of evangelism."(Brackney 1983:08) He wrote pamphlets on a regular basis and traveled widely teaching against missions. McBeth says "Perhaps no person did more to fix antimissions upon Baptists."(1987:373)

Alexander Campbell was also a leader among the anti-missionists. Campbell's frequent attacks had to do, in part, with the expense of mission societies. McBeth says that Campbell "accused some mission societies of greed, dishonesty, embezzlement, and outright stealing."(1987:375) Although Campbell was a Baptist for only seventeen years, his followers worked to remove human traditions from what they believed was the primitive order of the New Testament.

Several reasons can be cited for the widespread anti-mission movement. Theology played a role. The Second Great Awakening in the early 1800s had softened Calvinist theology, thus encouraging missions and evangelism. There were some Baptists on the frontier that held to such strict predestination that mission societies represented mere human efforts and therefore seemed improper.

Another reason for anti-missions among Baptists was a strong biblicism. McBeth says "Biblicism refers to the concept that no organization or effort can be permitted in the church but what is specifically named in the New Testament." Parker ridiculed the idea of mission societies saying that "God had required no mission society to send Jonah to Nineveh."(ibid.) Campbell used biblicism to

invalidate theological seminaries, mission boards and salaries for pastors. Those who advocated biblicism refused to advocate any structure that they felt was not included in the New Testament. For the biblicists human efforts such as the establishment of a mission society had "neither precept nor example to justify it within the two lids of the Bible."(Sweet 1964:69-70)

Sectional jealousies provided another reason for the anti-mission movement. Frontier Baptists were aware that mission societies were headquartered in Boston and New York. They feared that northeastern churches with their educated clergy, would gain control over the entire denomination and they scoffed at preachers in the east who did not understand the farmer-preachers of the frontier. Sweet records the sentiment of the frontier preachers who were jealous of the refined preachers of the east in the sentiment of one who said,

> Well, if you must know, Brother Moderator, you know the big trees in the woods overshadow the little ones; and these missionaries will be all great men and the people will all go to hear them preach, and we shall all be put down. That's the objection.(1964:74)

Although largely confined to the frontier, the impact of anti-missions was vast among Baptists. It gave Baptists in America their first major experience with a divisive internal doctrinal controversy. McBeth indicates that "What began as objections to mission methods soon expanded to include other issues, such as the nature of biblical authority, distrust of denominational leaders and programs, and a suspicion of any new ideas and methods."(McBeth 1987:377) Those who embraced the model of mission societies eventually became a part of

the Southern Baptist Convention, while those who did not became independent. Baptists were able to find threads that connected them to one another, in spite of divisions throughout their struggle, to survive as a denomination. Baptists found that both revivalism and freedom were entirely congenial to their convictions and these threads helped to enable the connectionalism that would further evolve into a denomination and into a larger corporate structure.(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:4)

The roots that would eventually anchor the Southern Baptist Convention as a powerful denomination sprang from the earlier and more fragile shoots of Baptist history. There have been several efforts to trace the lineage of Baptists which have produced different versions of their history. Some think that the first Baptist church emerged in 1609 in Amsterdam out of the Puritan-Separatist tradition that had embraced a general atonement and baptized by effusion. Others believe the first Baptist church emerged in London, England in 1641 from another Puritan-Separatist tradition with a Particular or Calvinist theory of atonement because they baptized by immersion. Still others trace the beginnings of Baptists life to continental Anabaptists emerging out of the Reformation in 1525. Historian Jesse Fletcher says "In recent years, most historians have conceded the honor to the little group of believers that surrounded John Smyth in Amsterdam in 1609"(1994:19) Smyth's small group of separatists were eventually preserved by Thomas Helwys when Smyth left the group because of worries about successionism. Upon Helwys' death John Murton led the

congregation through difficult times. Fletcher says "Because their concept of salvation was anchored in a doctrine of free grace to all who would receive it, a position in conflict with the prevailing Calvinistic concepts, these early Baptists were called General Baptists."(1994:24) McBeth explains that the General Baptists were less influenced by John Calvin, who taught that only the predestined may be saved, and more influenced by the Dutch theologian, Jacob Arminius, whose theology made room for free will.(1987:21) These General Baptists became the first Baptist church on English soil. However, they had to share the spotlight with a group founded by Henry Jacob who embraced a mild form of Calvinism. They became known as Particular Baptists. McBeth says that "they taught a "particular" atonement. They believed that Christ died not for all mankind, but only for "particular" ones, namely the elect."(1987:22) Although the Mennonites, who had fled to Amsterdam in 1607 to escape persecution in England, impacted John Smyth, it was Smyth's embracing of Arminian views that cause many historians to tie Baptist beginnings to continental Anabaptists from whom the Mennonites sprang.

Personalities of mainstream Anabaptist thought had reflected similar views to John Smyth. Balthasar Hubmaier, for example, rejected infant baptism, advocated baptism only for those who confessed faith, believed in separation of church and state, and taught that a local church should be made up of the totality of the redeemed.(Scharpff 1964:15) Such views had led to persecution of the Anabaptists in Europe. Anabaptist Menno Simons and his followers, the

Mennonites of Holland were encountered by Smyth who tried to join them. John Smyth and the members of his separatist group of Christians came into contact with this group when they organized the first Baptist church in Holland in 1609.(McBeth 1987:32-33) However, the Mennonites rejected Smyth who was accused of being too chargeable or quick to move from religious group to religious group. After Smyth's death many of his followers merged into the Mennonite church. Smyth's defense for his chargeable nature was that he was always changing for the better.(:33) Helwys returned to England because he realized that he was a Baptist and did not share the Mennonite views that Smyth sought to engage.

Persistent persecution plagued the Baptists who had returned to England until the reforms of Oliver Cromwell during 1640 to 1660. In what some have called "Baptists' golden age", Baptist congregations grew. General Baptists had grown to seventy-nine congregations and Particular Baptists numbered ninety-six congregations.

General Baptists, as they grew from Smyth and Helwys' early leadership, soon became connectional like many other Arminian bodies. Fletcher says "The purpose of such connections among both General and Particular Baptist churches was "to steady one another in doctrine and explain themselves unitedly to the world, to aid one another in time of need, and especially to propagate their views."(1994:29)

Baptists in England again came under heavy restrictions by 1660 and many of them migrated to the colonies. General Baptists declined rapidly through the period while Particular Baptists grew. However,

the views of both groups continued to develop even in the colonies and according to Jesse C. Fletcher "can be seen in contemporary Southern Baptist conflicts."(1994:30)

Baptist churches developed in the Middle Colonies during the 1700s where they established associations as a reflection of their connectionalism and even banded together to send missionaries prior to the Revolutionary War. But the real growth of Baptists was made possible by the fires that ignited in the Great Awakening. Many churches enlivened by the Great Awakening became known as "New Light" or "Separate" churches. They were called Separates because of the desire to separate themselves from the Congregational Church established by law in the New England colonies. Their religious views had been characterized by intense devotion to evangelism. They were called New Light because of their emphasis upon the possibility of individual inspiration and enlightenment through the Holy Spirit.(Noll 1992:98) When they were resisted by the older churches, they became Baptists. During the period the older Baptist churches became known as Regular Baptists while the New Light churches increasingly became known as Separate Baptist churches. McBeth says that their factions took the name of Regular in the form of mostly urban churches that shied away from revival emotions, while the Separates "saw the revivals as a genuine work of God."(1987:204)

One of the most famous of these churches was the Sandy Creek church of North Carolina led by Shubal Stearns in 1755. Stearns, born in 1706, in Boston, had been influenced by the New Light Christians

and became a Baptist in 1751.(Fletcher 1994:31) He had learned that the Piedmont section of North Carolina was desirous of preaching and in November, 1755, Stearns moved there. Stearns, with eight other families, completed a small meeting house, which they called Sandy Creek, and formed themselves into a Separate Baptist church of sixteen members, with Stearns as pastor. Samuel Hill and Robert Torbet indicate that "From their Sandy Creek church the Baptist movement radiated with startling vitality and success, so that the Baptist denomination in the South decisively bears the stamp of their influence."(1964:69) This church grew rapidly and birthed forty-two additional churches. By 1758, Stearns, almost entirely by his own efforts, founded the Sandy Creek Association.(McBeth 1987:229) McBeth indicates that for twelve years all the Separate Baptists in Virginia and the Carolinas remained in this association.(232-235)

Fletcher says "While both the Regular Baptists from the Philadelphia tradition and the Separate Baptists affirmed Calvinistic doctrine, the Separate Baptists brought a lively evangelistic element that soon modified the Calvinism of both groups of Baptists."(1994:32) Walter Shurden has commented that Southern Baptists were developing both traditions: the Charleston tradition which was a triumph of Particular Baptists over General Baptists, and the Sandy Creek tradition which was a direct outcome of the revivalism of the Great Awakening.(ibid.) The union of the two traditions would contribute to the eventual development of thought within the Southern Baptist

Convention in the person of Richard Furman. Fletcher says "His experience included the best of both the Sandy Creek tradition and the Charleston tradition . . . ."(1994:32)

Although religious freedom was one leg that supported the emergence of Baptists, it was Baptist confessionalism and connectionalism that served as the other two legs. The fourth leg, however, became for Southern Baptists the most catalytic in its foundation.

Pietists in the northern countries of Europe ventured outward in mission after the Protestant Reformation. The call to salvation and the fellowship of believers, announced by Lutheran pietists, for example, was heard and heeded by many. Paulus Scharpff says that strong revival movements came to life out of the pietistic movement.(1964:32) Scharpff further notes in the appeal of pietism were the "roots of present-day evangelism."(1964:23) Even the Church of England attempted missionary work among its colonies and to the Indians in the New World. Baptists provided a strong missionary consciousness through men like Pastor Andrew Fuller and William Carey. Carey and Fuller were instrumental in the development of the Baptist Missionary Society to support the work of missionaries around the world. Brackney says "At the 1791 meeting of the Northampton Association, Carey joined Fuller in making a plea for missionary endeavor, and the two men became the chief advocates of a "Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathens."(1983:88) Such societies, which were gatherings of like-minded individuals who pooled

their resources for the support of missionaries, began to multiply. Hundreds developed and provided an early connectionalism among Baptist churches. William Brackney says that "virtually all of the major twentieth-century Baptist organizations have their origin in organized missionary endeavor."(Fletcher 1994:35) The convening of the Triennial Baptist Convention in 1814, called the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions was a direct outgrowth of the missionary spirit burning in the churches and the beginning of a denominational approach.(McBeth 1987:344) Fletcher says "The denominationalism, inspired by the missionary spirit, continued to escalate and brought Baptists together in a way that "faith and order" had not been able to do."(1994:37) Soon, states began to follow the model of the Triennial Convention and organized with South Carolina and Georgia among the first. It was the first organization of national scope for Baptists.(McBeth 1987:344)

According to Fletcher "The excitement of denominational consciousness with its expanded connectionalism riding a passion for missions was soon overshadowed by the dark cloud of sectional conflict."(1994:39) Differing interests and politics had been developing all along in the states. Economics, cultural differences, the expanding frontier were among the many forces at play to divide the new nation. As early as 1837 Kentucky Baptists complained about the appointment and deployment of missionaries by the eastern dominated Home Mission Society. But as Fletcher indicates "it was the

issue of slavery that galvanized this sectionalism for both Baptists and the nation as a whole."(ibid.) McBeth says that there were at least three factors that led to schism: disagreements on the methods of organization of the denomination, concerns about home missions, and the slavery issue.(1987:381) McBeth says "While each of these played an important role, they were not of equal weight; slavery was the final and most decisive factor which led Southern Baptists to form their own convention."(ibid.)

The slavery issue had deep roots in the South. As David Davis says "By the 1820s the institution of Negro slavery had come to dominate all aspects of Southern society."(1977:566) The sectional conflicts between North and South were further deepened as Southern leaders sought to infuse their defense of slavery with America's mission. Davis says that "By portraying Britain as the chief enemy of slavery as well as of republican government, Southerners succeeded in wedding the cause of slavery with the nation's expanding "empire for liberty."(:567)

Baptist abolitionists in the North, encouraged by English Baptists, pressed the question of slavery at several meetings of the Triennial Convention urging Baptists to follow England who had abolished slavery in 1833. By 1833, the Baptist Union sent a lengthy letter to the Triennial Convention in America in which they condemned "the slave system . . . as a sin to be abandoned, and not an evil to be mitigated."(Foss and Matthews 1850:18) McBeth says that they urged

Baptists in America "to do all in their power to effect its speedy overthrow."(1987:301)

The persistance of the abolitionists angered many Southerners even in the face of defenses for slavery by well known leaders of Baptists such as Richard Furman. Soon test cases began to be presented to the Home Mission Society. In November, 1844, the Alabama Baptist state convention demanded that the Board of Managers of the Baptist General Convention explicitly avow that slaveholders were as eligible to become missionaries as were non-slaveholders. Donald Matthews indicates their response was "that they could never be a party to any arrangement which would imply approbation of slavery."(1965:281)

Georgia Baptists had also tested the waters earlier with a slaveholding missionary candidate and challenged the Home Mission Society to appoint him for service. The society rejected the candidate and officially stated in 1841 that they would not appoint a slaveholder. (Fletcher 1994:40) Mathews says that since Northerners would not affirm Negro servitude as an amoral act of life acceptable to all Baptists "dissidents formed the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845."(1965:281)

The Virginia *Religious Herald* of March 13, 1845, called the response to the Georgia and Alabama test cases "an outrage of our rights."(*Religious Herald:* March 13,1845) They issued a sweeping critique of the national societies' responses and a resolution declaring:

> That in the present exigency, it is important that those brethren who are aggrieved by the recent decision of the Board in Boston, should hold a Convention, to confer on the best means of promoting the Foreign Mission cause, and other interests of the Baptist denominations in the South. (*Religious Herald:* 10 April 1845)

They insisted they did not wish to merely have a sectional Convention but were interested in establishing a Convention that represented Southern interests as well as the development of a Southern Theological Institution that would train their ministers to function in the South.(Brackney 1983:232-233) As a result, the Virginia Baptist Convention called for a meeting to discuss the issue and made arrangements to meet in Augusta, Georgia. Fletcher says "Sentiment ran strong that the South needed a Foreign Mission Society and a Home Mission Society that would not discriminate against their missionary candidates or accuse their funds of being tainted."(1994:40) Enthusiasm grew for the meeting and 327 delegates started the journey toward Georgia.(McBeth 1987:388) Thus, on Thursday, May 8, 1845 in Augusta, Georgia the Southern Baptist Convention was founded with the establishment of a Foreign Mission Board and a Domestic Mission Board. Although the issue of slavery had been the wedge that divided the Baptists, their passion for missions gave them every reason to feel justified in beginning a new convention.(Estep 1994:54) McBeth indicates that in their efforts to explain the formation of the new convention, the second reason given was that "the Southerners were restoring the original basis of Baptist

missionary work."(1987:390) The constitution they wrote staked out the convention's home field for missions and included foreign missions as the "extension of the Messiah's kingdom."(ibid.) They wrote in the preamble to their constitution that the purpose of the convention was "a plan for eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of the whole denomination in one sacred effort, for the propagation of the Gospel."(Estep 1994:49)

The newly formed Southern Baptist Convention wasted no time in the establishment of two mission boards to serve as the channels through which its mission concern would be accomplished. Rutledge and Tanner show that "The work of both foreign and home missions would be conducted by one convention, with a separate board for each rather than with a completely independent organization for each."(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:17) This kind of organization centralized control and strategy but also caused mission work to fight constantly for approval, funding, and support to carry forth the work. Daniel Bestor, Sr., one of the early leaders of the Domestic Mission Board lamented:

> I have learned by visiting many, and by extensive correspondence, that our brethren prefer carrying on their domestic missionary operations, through their Associations and State Conventions. They approve, invariably, of our Southern organization; but I cannot persuade them to act efficiently in its support.(:18-19)

There were constant problems with finances as well as with leadership. The Board struggled for stability as leader after leader resigned in

the face of very slow growth and the constant drain of raising money to support the work.

The direction of missions was driven by evangelistic concern. In fact, it seems that evangelistic concern was the primary reason for Southern Baptist involvement in missions. During the early years the Board sought to articulate its objectives along two fronts: (1) "To assist feeble Churches through the Southern and South Western (sic) States and Territories, to obtain the stated preaching of the gospel," and (2) "to supply newly settled and growing parts of the country, with the preaching of the gospel where we have at present no churches."(:20) Thus, the Board became dependent upon the passion of certain leaders to achieve Southern Baptists' concern for carrying the gospel to the world.

Throughout its history the Home Mission Board sought to highlight evangelism in all areas of its work. Evangelism and mission for Southern Baptists have been so closely interlaced that very early in its history mission depended entirely upon evangelism for its energy. James B. Taylor, a founder of the SBC and early missionary said that the primary task of the missionary is the preaching of the gospel "This is your appropriate work. For this you are distinctly sent forth . . . ."(Estep 1994:84) Thus, evangelism carried significant importance in the underlying assumptions Southern Baptists had about missions. The importance of evangelism has not changed in emphasis substantially over the course of SBC history. In fact, Rutledge and Tanner make the case that evangelism is the major purpose of all Home

Mission Board programs.(1969:216) This is due in part to the place in the Home Mission Board's history that evangelism as a program has occupied.

3.2 Central to the Founding of the Home Mission Board.

When the Southern Baptist Convention was organized in 1845, its purpose was to evangelize America. Its primary mission board was instructed by the Convention to "direct its future labors chiefly upon the basis of evangelization . . . ."(ibid.) *Our Home Field* a periodical of the time reported:

> The evangelistic department of the Home Board's work has met with favor everywhere. The work is so in keeping with the primary things for which Baptists stand it necessarily finds approval among our people. Baptists believe in education, missions, and all good philanthropies, but they believe supremely in the necessity of a soul's regeneration as the first and chief thing. All else gets its significance from that . . . The evangelists themselves have commended themselves to the confidence and won the esteem of our people wherever they have gone. Godly, spiritual, humble, glowing with a passion for souls, they have offered in their lives no discrepancy with their work . . . The era of missions and revivals is on in the South.(1907:6-7)

Articles, such as the one in *Our Home Field*, indicate that missions could be defined in Southern Baptist life in terms of evangelistic fervor. There seems to be little evidence that mission was any broader than the idea of carrying the gospel to unbelievers. The importance of evangelism was equated to building the kingdom of God.

Rutledge and Tanner explain that "the evangelism program . . . has made an extremely influential contribution to the life of the denomination and to the building of the kingdom of God."(1969:227) Literature written to describe the foundations and purposes of the agencies reflects the importance of evangelism that Southern Baptists feel.

When the Convention was founded it was said to have been organized by men with a kingdom vision.(McBeth 1987:390) They recognized the importance of carrying the gospel to people at home and abroad. In 1845, the Southern Baptist Convention established two mission boards to serve the denomination as channels for carrying out its kingdom vision which was the propagation of the message of Christ to the world. The Convention established a mission sending agency for work at home and a Foreign Mission Board for work overseas.

The Convention located the Domestic Mission Board (later re-named the Home Mission Board and currently named the North American Mission Board) in Marion, Alabama. Since Marion had played an important part in Baptist life, the Board made its home there for 37 years. Marion was the location of the largest Southern Baptist church west of Augusta, Georgia in 1845 and two Baptist colleges, Howard and Judson, were founded there. Marion also represented an expansion westward toward the frontier. It provided a gateway to the Mississippi Valley.(:424) In 1882, the Home Mission Board was moved from Marion, Alabama to the booming town of Atlanta, Georgia where it has been ever since.

The establishment and direction of the mission boards by the Convention itself identified the work of missions as basic for the Convention.(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:217) This work of missions, however, concentrated on and defined itself in terms of evangelistic actions as will be seen in the history that unfolds within the work of the Evangelism Section.

3.3 Early Mission Activity.

From earliest days home missionaries gave major attention to evangelistic projects. This was evident in the primary thrust of work among the Negroes, the frontier people, and the Indians, as well as in the work of the older states.(Starkes 1984:215) Baptists had been troubled by the fact that only five percent of Negroes in 1800 in the United States were professing Christians.(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:134) Concern for Blacks was as much a reflection of the plantation mindset as it was spiritual in nature. John Lee Eighmy explains that "The major responsibility for the spiritual care of the slaves, however, remained with the whites; and Baptists continually concerned themselves with the problem of Christianizing the black population."(1972:28) Although the Home Mission Board was instructed to "take all prudent measures for the religious instruction of the colored population . . ." problems remained that kept an aggressive ministry to Blacks limited in scope.(:29) Church-state relations were strained because of laws restricting the instruction of slaves. The Home Mission Board acquiesced to the legal restrictions by advising

"that all work with Negroes be conducted orally where laws prohibited instruction in reading."(Proceedings, SBC 1849:39) As a result, the work grew slowly. Starkes points out the slow progress of the evangelization effort that "In spite of this mandate, only two missionaries were appointed to work with blacks prior to the Civil War. Both of these worked in Georgia."(1984:215) Even fewer Indians had been evangelized and Baptists sought to provide a witness to them partly out of a sense of obligation to the original American. (Rutledge and Tanner 1969:153) By 1860, the work had grown to 116 missionaries working in the domestic and Indian fields. But soon the clouds of civil war gathered and only a year after the war began the number of missionaries dwindled to six.

The blight of war and financial problems hurt the work of the Board. Confusion and helplessness was the order of the day. The Board did not know which way to turn. The need at hand, the Civil War, provided some answers. The Board began to work with soldiers and during four years of war employed 137 missionaries to evangelize men in the Army. This ministry was most rewarding because it gave the Board a sense of purpose amid the suffering of the nation. But the war left the Board weak and wounded due to the collapse of finances and the general depression of defeat in the South.

By 1866, the Southern Baptist Convention instructed the Board to direct its future labors chiefly upon the basis of evangelization and to promote a comprehensive system of evangelism including the

appointment of evangelists. A year later the Board reported that evangelists made up one-fifth of its staff. (Kelley 1983:17-18)

But growth was slow. Just as the South had to rebuild after the war, so also did the Board. In the midst of financial problems and rekindling of work left weakened by war the Home Mission Board pushed ahead with the task it had begun years before. During the next 40 years the conviction deepened among many Southern Baptists that better coordination and promotion of evangelism as a program was needed throughout the Convention.(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:216)

3.4 The Development of Evangelistic Strategies.

Concern for the evangelistic task continued through 1905 when a committee was appointed to study the work of evangelism and to bring back a report to the Convention. Chairman L. G. Broughton brought back a report to the 1906 Convention recommending the creation of a Department of Evangelism within the Home Mission Board.

The committee recommended:

1. That the Convention instruct the Home Mission Board to create a Department of Evangelism and a general evangelist and as many associates as practical to be employed.

2. That the Home Mission Board be requested to adopt such measures and methods as may be found necessary to gain effectiveness to this department of work.

3. That Baptist people be requested to increase their contribution by at least $25,000 for its support, and that the Home Mission Board take necessary steps to raise this amount in addition to the amount needed for their work. (Lawrence 1958:93-94)

This was a bold and needed step for the program of evangelism. But not everyone agreed. There were those who believed such a move by the Convention would infringe upon the rights of the local church. But an impassioned speech by B.H. Carroll, who was one of the greatest leaders among Southern Baptists at that time, convinced the Convention of the responsibility to create a staff of general evangelists.(:93)

Carroll used the Scripture to show how the evangelist was an appointee of God to do work of most permanent character in the kingdom; that the evangelist, like apostles and pastors, was to be set in the church, and the Word of God offered many illustrations of the work of evangelists in the first century. (:94) In response to Carroll's speech the Convention instructed the Home Mission Board to work out a general plan and policy for organizing evangelistic work throughout the Convention.

The Board also chose to approach the task of evangelizing America through revival meetings as a primary method of evangelism.(Kelley 1983:18) No doubt this was reflective of the history of revivalism on the early frontier of the country and reflective of the great prayer movements that swept the country at the turn of the 20th century. J. Edwin Orr wrote that the revivals which arose out of the Great Awakening served to emphasize prayer as a powerful movement and to involve all denominations in the revival spirit.(1973:7-18) Scharpff illustrates the lasting power of the awakening spirit by saying that "In 1857 began a revival movement which in the course of a single year was to encompass most of the cities of the United States . . . ."

(1964:170) The energy of revivalists such as Edwards, Whitefield, and Wesley during the First Awakening contributed to the overall revival ethos of the time. Later evangelists of the Second Awakening period also contributed.

J.B. Lawrence writes "The superintendent of the department was considered a general evangelist, and the rest of the staff was composed of preachers and singers enlisted to conduct revival meetings."(Lawrence 1958:94) Rutledge and Tanner indicate "During the next twenty-two years, directed by four superintendents, the work was projected through a staff of evangelists."(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:217) This methodology would set a precedent for years to come in the structure of the Home Mission Board programs of evangelism.

W. W. Hamilton served the department from 1906-09. Though evangelists were supported by salary from the Board, money was collected in their revival meetings. This money went into the Home Mission Board's treasury, helping the department to remain self-supporting.(:218)

Hamilton pioneered several evangelistic fields but most were reflective of the methodology of revivalism. He was instrumental in the development of city-wide campaigns across much of the South. These campaigns actually were simultaneous revivals on the part of all local churches within a particular city. A union meeting would be held during the day and meetings in each of the local churches at night. Indications are that Southern Baptists began to make gains in the cities because of these revivals. In fact, baptisms in 1906 stood

at 124,911 and gained only 4,241 the next year. As the evangelists moved to the cities the net increase in baptisms was four times larger, up 17,565 in 1908. Hamilton was also instrumental in the development of evangelism conferences during his tenure.

Hamilton wrote a book entitled Bible Evangelism. The book discussed as chapter headings the meaning, the messenger, the message, the motive, the methods, the mistakes, the membership, the mission, the money, the music, the measure, and the Master in evangelism.(Hamilton:1921) Hamilton brought a high degree of respectability to evangelism as he sought to move the program to a more formal approach. Hamilton resigned in 1909.

Weston Bruner served the department from 1910 to 1917. In 1916 there were 20 evangelists who reported 20,709 people for baptism. Bruner started associational campaigns and appointed special evangelists to the colleges, the mountain areas, and to work with Blacks. (Rutledge and Tanner 1969:217)

Hamilton returned to serve a second term from 1918 to 1921. During his second term Hamilton and the evangelists on staff assisted the local churches in solving many of their problems, such as increasing pastor's salaries and raising money to pay for church debts and church buildings.

During the 1921 church year, Southern Baptists had the largest annual increase in one year in baptisms. They baptized nearly 60,000 more people than the year before. It was the result of the "Onward Movement" which included a strong emphasis on Baptist doctrine, a

challenge to increased giving in the "75 million campaign", an effort to raise 75 million dollars for the work of the Convention, and two-week revivals conducted in every church. The record of an increase of 60,000 people baptized in a single year over the previous year has been duplicated only one time since. In 1980, baptisms reached a high of 61,004 over the previous year.(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:47-52)

Oscar Eugene Bryan, Sr. served from 1922 to 1924. The corps of evangelists grew to 24 under his leadership. They included singers and preachers and used a budget in 1922 of $85,000 to do the work. They spent $72,842.05 of the actual budget.(Kelley 1983:18)

Ellis A. Fuller served the department from 1925 to 1928. He began statewide evangelistic efforts and enlisted evangelists and singers for participation in the churches. An evangelism committee was encouraged in every association. Churches advertised their meetings with banners. Pastors were encouraged to preach their own revivals.(ibid.)

Success in the program of evangelism seemed to be assured until disaster struck. In 1928, C. S. Carnes, treasurer of the Home Mission Board, embezzled over $900,000 of the Board's money. His actions almost brought the Board to bankruptcy.(Lawrence 1958:110) As a result of this crisis the department was closed for eight years. The depression also caused undue strain on the Home Mission Board and the churches.

When Southern Baptists met in St. Louis for the 1936 Convention, they were ready to revive the department. M. E. Dodd, pastor of the

First Baptist church of Shreveport, Louisiana, made a motion to approve the plan to revive the Department of Evangelism. The motion passed and Roland Q. Leavell was elected evangelism department secretary by the Board.(Kelley 1983:20)

From 1936 to 1944 Leavell served as secretary. Funds were limited at the Home Mission Board and the department needed all the support it could get. The financial stringency turned out to be a blessing because it led to new constructive approaches to evangelism.(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:218) The approach taken by the department within the next 10 years produced several factors influencing development toward a unified program of evangelism for Southern Baptists.(Kelley 1983:20)

Person-to-person evangelism for pastors and lay people began to be stressed. Leavell gave strong emphasis to ". . . training and inspiring the rank and file of the church members to lead others to Christ."(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:218-219) Home evangelism was encouraged through the establishment of family altars. This was not new, however, since Hamilton had also stressed family altars and gave a report each year on the number of families who made commitments in this area.

Emphasis was given to conducting a protracted meeting in every church and to preach in every destitute place and in every individual community. Leavell produced helpful evangelistic literature and reported results of the teaching and training ministry to the Sunday School Board for use in its annual report to the Convention. The

philosophy of the department under Leavell was different from earlier secretaries of evangelism. Chuck Kelley says that Leavell "believed he was to become the evangelism specialist for the SBC."(1993:26) He became more than just the general secretary of evangelism as his predecessors had been. Now "the secretary of evangelism became one to whom Southern Baptists looked for strategy and programming in the areas of evangelism, as well as one who could preach revivals and lead evangelism clinics."(ibid.) Later financial constraints, however, caused the Home Mission Board to think seriously about its department's direction.

Former leaders had built the staff along the lines of revival crusades with singers, evangelists, and organizational support. Much of what Leavell proposed was limited to what he could do as an individual. Chuck Kelley writes "The result was a change in emphasis as the department sought to promote the task of evangelism within the churches and across the Convention more than to perform the work of evangelism for various congregations and associations."(:20) This was an early effort toward a catalytic approach to evangelistic programming.

Leavell defined the primary objectives of the department to be: . . . to keep aflame the spirit of evangelism . . . to help organize and promote city-wide simultaneous campaigns . . . to conduct associational-wide campaigns . . .(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:219)

Leavell resigned in 1944 to re-enter the pastorate. Fred Eastham was appointed to succeed Leavell. He began work in 1944 and served

for 22 months. As World War II progressed, concern about the Southern Baptist evangelism program grew. Many believed that the distraction of the war years would lead to Southern Baptist decline in evangelistic fervor. A committee of 18 was commissioned to study the matter and report to the Convention in 1944. Significant insights were gained by the study.(Kelley 1983:28)

The committee found that the ratio between baptisms and membership had changed. In 1940, Southern Baptists had one baptism for every 20.7 members. By 1942, it had dropped to one baptism for every 25.6 members. Membership had increased more than 125,000 but baptisms had increased less than 500 during 1941-1942.

Obviously the distractions of war, the lack of men in the churches, due to the war, who had largely directed evangelistic activity, and the decrease of evangelistic efficiency was cause for concern.(ibid.)

The committee report challenged the churches and the mission boards. It called for more soul-winning efforts in the churches and for the Home Mission Board to strengthen evangelistic forces. It also called for a great South wide evangelistic crusade for 1945, the centennial year for Southern Baptists.(SBC Annual 1945:78-79)

The report was adopted with M. E. Dodd, a Shreveport, Louisiana pastor, elected general director of the Crusade. Eastham was asked to assist M. E. Dodd with the work. The Crusade was called ". . . the greatest soul-winning effort in history."(:58) But that optimism was not shared by all.

Dodd had spent seven months in the field during 1945 prior to the revival. He promoted the great crusade with its goal of 1,000,000 baptisms over a 12 month period. When the count was made 256,699 people were actually baptized. Based on previous years' baptismal records the goal was obviously unrealistic. The shadow of defeat was ensured by such an unrealistic goal.

C.E. Wilbanks wrote in his biography of C.E. Matthews, who would succeed Fred Eastham as evangelism director, that the results of the crusade broke the heart of Dodd and in mid-summer of 1945, Dodd called C. E. Matthews, the pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Ft. Worth, Texas. Dodd's depression actually played a part in looking for new ways to make evangelism work in churches.(Wilbanks 1957:115)

Matthews had been involved in evangelistic work in Texas for many years. He flew out to meet with Dodd, J. B. Lawrence, and W. H. Knight, executive secretary of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. They met all day and talked about the results of the crusade and about other evangelistic work.

Dodd had recently been in a crusade in Baltimore where he said results were very discouraging. He was overwhelmed with a sense of defeat. He turned to Matthews and said "Charley, you have had good results in Texas in crusades. What Southern Baptists need is a PROGRAM. We do not have a program of evangelism. I want you to tell me about what you have in your mind about a program."(:115) When the day was finished M.E. Dodd was jubilant. Knight had also endorsed the

concept Matthews related. Dodd's health, however, would not permit him to carry out the program.

After nearly two years of service Fred Eastham resigned to re-enter the pastorate. J. B. Lawrence, executive secretary-treasurer of the Home Mission Board, began to look for a successor. Lawrence was a man of prayer and prayed "that only God's selection would consider the position." Lawrence said:

> Someone suggested, I do not know who that someone was, that the man for the place (position) was C. E. Matthews. I made some inquiry and found from all sources that he surely was the man. I shall never forget the first sentence that he spoke after greeting me. That sentence was, "I was looking for your letter."(Wilbanks 1957:117)

At the annual meeting of the Board, November 7, 1946, C. E. Matthews was elected to head the Department of Evangelism for the Home Mission Board.

3.5 A Shift in Emphasis.

Never again would the Home Mission Board have a Department of Evangelism with a large staff of evangelists and singers gathered only to conduct revivals. Southern Baptists would embark on an era where a program of evangelism would become multi-faceted. At least, that was the hope. This approach also marked a change in the Convention's involvement in programs as the vehicle by which evangelism and mission would be carried out. Matthews was a charismatic person who convinced Convention leadership that effective programs were the best methods for implementing strategies. Thus, an enthusiasm for programming was

ignited and given credence because of the successes of Matthew's approach.

The winds of change began to blow across the Convention with regard to evangelistic actions in the local churches. C. E. Matthews was committed to the idea of an wholistic program of evangelism that could involve all Southern Baptist churches, agencies, and boards in the task of bringing people to Christ. It was not an easy task. The Evangelism Department had to overcome a history of evangelism approaches that was by no means comprehensive. Churches had basically used revivalism as the primary approach. Even this approach began to have problems as baptismal records would confirm.(Kelley 1983:35-38)

Each year thousands of churches reported no baptisms. This was a personal concern for Matthews. All his life Matthews had won persons to Christ. He was known as a pastor who made his primary responsibility winning others to Christ.

Matthews wanted all Southern Baptists involved in evangelistic activity. At one point Matthews wrote "We must do something to make soul-winners of our church members."(1949:7) He believed that a unified program of evangelism was the answer. Matthews understood the job of the Department of Evangelism to be leading out in the development and promotion of a comprehensive approach to evangelism. Such a program would assign tasks at every level of the Convention--the individual church member, local churches, associations, as well as state and denominational boards and agencies. A unified effort in the work of evangelism would result in more baptisms.(Kelley 1983:33-34)

There was another concern for Matthews. The denomination needed permanency in the Department of Evangelism. Matthews wanted a solid program of evangelism. He wanted to make sure that the department would continue regardless of who led the work.

Matthews knew that over the years the department's work had been interrupted by a lack of leadership and emphasis. He wanted to see a Department of Evangelism as vital as any other department of work in any agency. Chuck Kelley writes that "Matthews sought to establish a program that would be so rooted in Baptist life that both the program and the department would be perpetuated."(:34)

Matthews worked closely with other leaders in the Convention. He held regular meetings with state evangelism secretaries, a position that Matthews created to further the work of evangelism in the states, to revise and review the program of evangelism. Kelley says "C. E. Matthews did everything possible to build support for the program throughout the Convention and to ensure that the program was reflective of the needs and desires at every level of Baptist life."(:35)

Matthews saw revivals as one of the most effective ways to carry out the program of evangelism. No doubt this conviction came from his years of involvement in revival efforts while pastor in Texas. Matthews preached 23 revivals in Travis Avenue Baptist Church in the 24 years he was pastor, and one revival five years after he resigned.(Wilbanks 1957:87) He believed in pastoral evangelism and that included the pastor preaching at least one revival in his church

each year. But his involvement in revivals extended to other churches as well. In fact, revivals in other churches made up a vital portion of the ministry of Matthews.

Obviously, Matthews carried his concern for revivals into the program of Evangelism he wished for Southern Baptists. In his book, *The Southern Baptist Program of Evangelism,* Matthews allows for only two methods of evangelism taught in the Bible; mass and personal evangelism. He saw these as Siamese twins. Matthews said "Any soul that was ever won to Christ by another, regardless of time, place or condition, was reached either through mass or personal evangelism."(1949:70)

Matthews' program of evangelism noted three methods of mass evangelism. He highlighted local church revivals held from time to time which had been so popular in Baptist life; city-wide revivals, in which all churches in a particular community met together in one central place with one evangelist preaching the revival meeting; and simultaneous revivals where all churches in a given area would hold individual revivals at exactly the same time.(Kelley 1983:37)

But Matthews' approach to the program of evangelism for Baptists was much more detailed. It went far beyond revivals and personal evangelism. At the Southern Baptist Convention in 1948, the Convention met to consider the first unified, Convention-wide plan of evangelism ever presented to Southern Baptists. It contained the following recommendations:

> That, the states, associations and churches continue to concentrate on the program of evangelism as set forth by the Southern Baptist Convention, which is the New Testament plan of worldwide evangelism. The success of this program and the extent of its reach depend upon the co-operative endeavor of every denominational leader, of every church organization, and of all the members of our local churches.
>
> That, we continue to be sympathetic toward, and increase our emphasis on mass evangelism and personal evangelism. We realize that one cannot succeed apart from the other. This comprises a call to enlist the fullest co-operation of all our missionaries at home and abroad. . . .
>
> Being aware of the progress that has been made in the states where the department of evangelism has been organized, and in accord with the program of the South wide Department of Evangelism, we furthermore urge:
>
> That, a department of evangelism should be created in each state as early as possible. That, a superintendent of evangelism should be elected to lead in his work in the various states . . . .(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:219)

Cooperation was widespread. As new state conventions were formed they assigned evangelistic promotion to a state convention staff member. The annual state evangelism conferences, suggested by Matthews, gained wide acceptance and moved toward their later high place of usefulness: "Other denominational agencies supported this important, continuing Convention-wide emphasis."(:220)

The Southern Baptist program of evangelism was underway. It was the first definite, ongoing program of evangelism for the Convention. Information about the program in detail was published by the Home Mission Board in the book written by C. E. Matthews entitled *The*

Southern Baptist Program of Evangelism. A free copy was given to every ordained minister in the Convention and the book was revised in 1952, 1956, and 1958. Other writings emphasized various approaches to evangelism and further defined the program.(Kelley 1983:41)

Obviously the new program of evangelism worked. Southern Baptists set new records in the number of baptisms registered. For the first time ever Southern Baptists broke the 300,000 mark in baptisms in 1948. Agencies and boards as well as local churches cooperated in evangelism as never before. Matthews served Southern Baptists faithfully from 1947 until 1955 when, in failing health, he resigned.

The Home Mission Board elected Leonard Sanderson to follow Matthews. On January 1, 1956, the former evangelism secretary for the Baptist General Convention of Tennessee began his duties. Under his leadership, evangelism gained a new prominence in denominational life. Chuck Kelley says "The department was restructured and became a division of the Home Mission Board."(1983:70)

Sanderson continued to stress both personal and mass evangelism and maintained cooperative relationships with state conventions and Convention-wide agencies. The staff grew to five in size. Sanderson described the program promoted during his years with the board as "cooperative evangelism."(ibid.)

As a part of this cooperative evangelism Sanderson continued the emphasis upon revival meetings. Local church revivals (two in every

church) and one simultaneous crusade in every association was reaffirmed. Simultaneous crusades remained a high priority.

Sanderson added new dimensions to the simultaneous approach to revivals. One was the linking of other Baptist bodies with Southern Baptists in a major simultaneous effort. Sanderson led seven Baptist groups in North America, including Southern Baptists, in an emphasis called the Baptist Jubilee Advance. It included a nationwide simultaneous crusade in 1959 in which 75,000 churches and 19 million North American Baptists were invited to participate.(:71)

Sanderson continued to promote a strong emphasis as did Matthews on a comprehensive program of evangelism by using church organizations in evangelistic programming. Materials were developed to encourage the leadership of every group in the church to set goals for winning people to Christ during the year. Sanderson wrote two study course books for the Sunday School Board: *Using the Sunday School in Evangelism* and *Personal Soul-Winning.* Particular emphasis was given to Sunday Schools. According to Kelley "Southern Baptists were taught that every organization, regardless of its unique function or purpose, shared a common responsibility to communicate the gospel to unbelievers."(ibid.)

Sanderson also emphasized personal evangelism. In 1958, personal evangelism was selected as a major theme of the department. The first Sunday in January was set aside as "Soul-Winning Commitment Day." Baptists were challenged to commit themselves to witness throughout

the coming year. Materials and books were published on personal evangelism.(Kelley 1983:77)

In late 1959, Sanderson returned to the pastorate and C. E. Autrey, then professor of evangelism at Southwestern Seminary, succeeded Sanderson to become the ninth leader of the evangelism division. He served until 1969. Autrey retained the best of Sanderson's leadership and Matthew's leadership. He maintained a balanced program with emphasis on personal evangelism and he retained a strong emphasis on mass evangelism by encouraging the use of various types of revivals.(ibid.)

During the 60s, Autrey gave a new emphasis to the area crusade. It was an effort where churches in a given area banded together for revival in that locale. These meetings were often held in football stadiums or community auditoriums. They were patterned after crusades of evangelists such as Billy Sunday, a generation earlier, and Billy Graham who had popularized crusades throughout the 50s and 60s.

Under Autrey's leadership the work expanded in response to dramatic changes in society and the growing nation-wide involvement of the Southern Baptist Convention. Staff associates were added to lead in metropolitan evangelism and in academic evangelism. The division enlarged to seven staff positions by 1968.(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:221) These changes reflected some modification to the program of evangelism. But, in spite of some modification under Autrey, the evangelism program began to be of concern to some. Revivals came under criticism due to a decline in the totals experienced during the 50's. In 1960, baptisms slipped below 400,000, but rebounded in 1961

to 403,315 and fell again in 1962 below 400,000. The decline lasted until 1971 when baptisms rose again to 409,669.

Southern Baptists began to criticize the emotional excesses and commercialism often associated with revivals. Some felt that revivals were losing their vitality as a tool for evangelism. According to Kelley "For the first time since C. E. Matthews inaugurated the simultaneous revival program, Southern Baptists began to raise serious questions about the methodology of mass evangelism."(Kelley 1983:97) But not all agreed. Many others were optimistic about revivals. In fact, most Southern Baptist churches continued to have two revivals per year. But the enthusiasm for revivals was not what it had been earlier. According to an interview with Autrey, pastors indicated they wanted fewer simultaneous revivals.(:98)

Autrey tried to maintain much of Matthews' and Sanderson's approach to the evangelism program. In fact, he continued to promote two-week revivals even though most churches began to vary from the standard set by the Convention. Changes in the program of evangelism for Southern Baptists were on the horizon.

Autrey believed that cultivative evangelism was one of his most significant contributions to the changing program of evangelism. This program called for a Christian to establish a relationship with another person before sharing the gospel. The idea was that by getting to know the person's need the gospel could be made more relevant to the lost person's life.(:89)

When he retired, C. E. Autrey had served longer than any other leader in evangelism. Additions to Southern Baptist churches during his tenure numbered 3,748,000 baptisms. The net gain in membership was over two million people.(:96) However, it should be noted that the 50's and 60's were years of sharp growth of Southern Baptists in all sectors of the South. It is therefore difficult to assume that the growth of the Convention came entirely as a result of the evangelism programs.

Ken Chafin came to the Home Mission Board in 1970 as one of its more innovative leaders. Under his leadership several changes were made in the Southern Baptist program of evangelism. One such change was in the program of revivalism. Although revivals had played an important part in the program of evangelism, Chafin broke with this tradition and began to place more emphasis on personal evangelism than on any other method. Chafin did not have a problem with revivals as a method of evangelism. Rather, he wanted personal evangelism to surface as the primary method of evangelism in the program. Chafin sought to make personal evangelism the most important part of the program of evangelism. Kelley says that "Chafin did not attempt to balance mass evangelism and personal evangelism."(:100) This approach to programming may have contributed to a decrease in comprehensiveness as one evangelistic methodology began to be highlighted over another. But in spite of changes, there were strengths in this major shift to personal evangelism as the central focus of the program.

To implement this approach the division designed a program to train laity to become evangelists. The program was known as the Lay Evangelism School or WIN which stood for Witness Involvement Now, which was its original name. The Lay Evangelism Schools were conducted by the Home Mission Board's evangelism department while the WIN materials were published by the Sunday School Board as support materials for the schools.(Kelley 1983:102)

The popularity of the WIN schools was apparent because of their wide acceptance among the churches. In 1972, the denomination reached a new high of 445,725 baptisms. That record was established after two years of WIN schools.(:106) It has not been surpassed since. However, one cannot assume the WIN schools made the difference entirely. There have been surges in baptismal rates throughout Southern Baptist history. In fact, the increase was 36,066 which is less than the 10 percent variance that was the annual average from 1950 to 1971. It can be assumed, however, that certain major evangelism programs such as WIN did contribute to these trends. Records were not kept at that time that recorded the number of re-baptisms that might have occurred. Many churches do not report accurate data with regard to persons immersed from other faiths therefore the date is difficult to ascertain.

Witness training contributed to baptisms the way Baptists assumed revivals had done earlier. Leonard Sanderson had been involved in the use of media during his term, but Chafin took the use of media a giant step forward. He led an evangelistic television program called,

"Spring Street, USA." Chafin intended "Spring Street USA" to be a program that could continue indefinitely. He envisioned the television program as a way to reach masses of people. But the program's future was not long lived. The Home Mission Board was not prepared to invest the money necessary to give the program a national exposure. The program ended in 1976.(:103)

New directions were taken by Chafin and the division. Lay Renewal Weekends led to a new and popular form of revival meeting during this time. Emphasis was placed upon laypersons who assumed leadership roles in worship services and in small group sharing. Small-group dynamics were popular during the 70s. Materials continued to be produced to aid churches in revival preparation. The program of evangelism also incorporated some popular approaches to revivalism. Lay Renewal was an example during Chafin's tenure. The renewal movement reflected what had been happening among the various groups outside the SBC and with leaders such as Quaker theologian Elton Trueblood, Southern Seminary Professor Finley Edge, and others.

C. B. Hogue, former secretary of evangelism of Oklahoma, succeeded Ken Chafin as head of the division in 1973. He served until 1982. During that time the Convention restructured the responsibility of the Evangelism Section for three programs of evangelism; mass evangelism, personal evangelism and the program of evangelism development to reach every level of Southern Baptist life. On the personal level, every Christian was to be motivated and trained to share the gospel as a matter of lifestyle. In evangelism conferences

local churches were challenged to develop strategies of lifestyle evangelism that would permeate communities. The denomination was challenged to make evangelism the underlying theme of every agency and program rather than the work of the Evangelism Section alone.(:109)

Personal witnessing centered on three methods that included WOW (Win Our World) a youth training program, TELL (Training Evangelistic Lay Leadership) a multi-media, self-taught method, and CWT (Continuing Witness Training) an apprenticeship approach to learning to share the gospel message. CWT was a response to the success of a structured methodology of witnessing such as that designed by James Kennedy of *Evangelism Explosion.*

Hogue believed that CWT would be the most popular evangelistic tool ever developed by Southern Baptists.(:111) Mass evangelism also received special concern during Hogue's leadership. Hogue made a conscious effort to restore the balance between mass and personal evangelism. Also, for the first time the Evangelism Section began to work with Southern Baptist vocational evangelists in a deliberate manner. Conferences were held and fellowship was highlighted as a way to encourage the vocational evangelists.

During Hogue's tenure an emphasis on spiritual awakening was promoted by the Evangelism Section. This approach was partially in response to the emphasis on awakening that had become popular among young people on the West Coast and among college students as in the Asbury revivals in 1970. Hogue felt the average person in the pew needed to be awakened spiritually for revival to really happen. A new

staff position was created to fill this need. It was led by Glenn Sheppard who had been heavily influenced by the popular Jesus Movement that began in California in the 60s.(Johnson 1988:57-58)

The program of evangelism development sought to work with churches to promote and develop a spirit of New Testament evangelism. The Growing an Evangelistic Church (GAEC) seminar was a way to incorporate evangelism into the emphasis on the church growth movement that had surfaced at Fuller Seminary. Fuller had emerged as a leading center for the study of church growth. Primarily through the work of Donald McGavran, Peter Wagner, and Win Arn, who led conferences at Fuller and across the country, the impact of church growth was taking hold in churches across the nation.

Prior to the rising popularity of the church growth movement Southern Baptists had defined church growth as the result of their mission and evangelism efforts. However, new models and new approaches suggested by Fuller's program led Hogue and others to believe that Southern Baptists could adapt the methods for Baptists thereby promising increased results.(Kelley 1983:115)

GAEC was a strategy, based upon McGavran's research, to help a church grow through a survey of its community and resources. It sought to equip individual churches to understand their context and to shape a local church strategy for evangelistic growth. However, the GAEC strategy fell short of proper contextualization since it did not prepare the church for the implications involved in reaching a larger cross-section of the culture.

Target group evangelization was also under the program of evangelism development. Work with ethnics, Blacks, youth, families, women, and singles was begun under Hogue's tenure.

This move was reflective of trends that had surfaced in society. For example, the family film series of James Dobson, whose Focus on the Family ministry had gained wide appeal among conservative churches, prompted concern that the Home Mission Board also address the family. Special national consultants were hired to address these and other target group needs. Consultants were para-staff and had little authority to influence policy. Their work depended on their own initiative and depended heavily on invitations from state directors for conferences in these target areas. At other times they worked with local churches and associations.(Johnson 1988:58-60)

C. B. Hogue resigned in 1982 to go to a pastorate. He was succeeded by Robert Hamblin. Hamblin's tenure was characterized by stronger agency cooperation in evangelism. Hamblin directed staff members to work in program areas with other agencies to emphasize evangelism in every aspect of the church's work.(ibid.)

Revival of simultaneous crusades and stronger emphasis on personal evangelism was the hallmark of Hamblin's administration. New materials were developed for churches to involve members in every aspect of evangelistic ministry. Under Hamblin's leadership a department of work was changed to include more of an emphasis on evangelism development in the local church and association. An emphasis on evangelism in the cities was also highlighted. A staff

member was added with primary responsibility in metro-evangelism. More work with the Interfaith Witness department was begun and cooperation between the Evangelism Section and the Language Missions Division of the Home Mission Board provided more evangelistic materials and resources for ethnic groups. However, the development of a comprehensive program of evangelism as in the days of C.E. Matthews did not occur formally under Hamblin's leadership.(:60-62)

The Evangelism Department's fourteenth leader was elected effective May 1, 1989 by the Home Mission Board of Directors. Darrell Robinson, former pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile, Alabama began work with the Evangelism Section staff with the agenda of making evangelism a program that would permeate church life in all its programs and emphases. Total church evangelism became the watchword of Robinson's programmatic approach. Through total church evangelism, Robinson envisioned the total penetration of a church's geographic area with the gospel and the total participation of every member of the church in the evangelistic thrust of the church. Under Robinson the 1990 simultaneous revivals were completed. Soul-winning encounters were begun at the annual Southern Baptist Convention meetings and national soul-winning training events were begun in several major cities across the country.(*SBC Annual* 1990)

The ongoing programs that Robinson inherited from previous administrations were tolerated by Robinson but not embraced. His focus was directed toward his own concept of effective programming that would characterize the evangelistic work of the Home Mission

Board throughout his tenure.(*Note:* Observations concerning the tenure of Robert Hamblin and Darrell Robinson were recorded by the writer of this thesis as he served as associate to both Hamblin and Robinson.)

Robinson's focus on "Total Church Life", as his program was called, was one that he brought to the Home Mission Board's Evangelism Section from his pastorate in Alabama. He had used the concept in his church and had published a book on the program. The successes of "Total Church Life" at Dauphin Way Baptist church would be brought by Robinson to the larger Convention's attention. Robinson's leadership style was gentle and encouraging. He did not delete programs that were already in place. He simply did not give them attention beyond his "Total Church Life" agenda. As a result programs slowed down as budget allocations were re-directed toward the inclusion of "Total Church Life" materials in the overall program of evangelism suggested by the Section.

For the first time in its history a program that had been designed and implemented for use in a local church setting was transferred in tact to all of the churches in the Convention. The wholesale adoption of "Total Church Life" supported the concept that what was successful in one Southern Baptist church would be successful in all of them. This was a radical departure for the work of the Section. C.E. Matthews had developed a program out of his experience in Texas but he had also included cooperation at every level of the agencies and in the states. Robinson's approach was to re-publish an updated version of his book and to develop materials to enhance the

book's use. But by and large the material was identical to the approach he had used in Alabama. Robinson's approach reinforced the underlying assumption among Southern Baptists that an effective program in one church could be made just as effective in another church given the right amount of commitment to it.

Robinson was also the first Vice-President of the Home Mission Board who had been the choice of the new conservative movement among Southern Baptists. He had been a very conservative pastor and active in the conservative movement before coming to the Board. Robinson did not enjoy the support of the conservative movement, however, when the Home Mission Board decided to re-structure and to name itself the North American Mission Board. The Board's militant conservative leaders downsized the Evangelism Section's staff, Robinson included in 1997, to put a person in place more in line with the agenda that had been set by the newly named agency and also to accommodate the merger of lesser agencies that were included in the re-structuring and that had been struggling for years.

John Yarborough, a pastor from central Georgia, was elected as the current leader of the Evangelism Section in 1998. Yarborough, a member of the re-structuring study committee, was elected by the Board to direct the evangelism department's new design. The work of the former Evangelism Section has been re-ordered into Evangelization Groups. The purpose of the groups according to the *Book of Reports:*

> exist to assist Christians and local churches
> as they fulfill the Great Commission through
> the intentional presentation of, and response

> to, the life-changing gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our efforts to accomplish this task are done in cooperative partnerships with Southern Baptist state conventions, associations, churches, and other Southern Baptist agencies. (1998:117)

The detailed work of the Evangelism Section is currently being re-defined under Yarborough, and new directions for the work are being devised.

The days of a comprehensive approach to evangelism defined and developed by C.E. Matthews have now expired. The North American Mission Board will no doubt move in directions that are very different from its history. It remains to be seen if these new directions will be contextualized enough to make a difference.

3.6 Trends in Mission Strategy.

The most glaring observation that one must make in looking at the work of the domestic mission agency is that from its very beginning it focused almost entirely upon evangelism and especially preaching as a means to fulfill its mission.(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:216) As a result the primary definition of mission for Southern Baptists has been in regard to preaching the gospel. That primary task is still central in the mind of Southern Baptists. This is a problem that serves to limit mission in a culture today that has largely turned away from preaching and has become hostile to evangelistic advances. It was not until much later in the history of the Home Mission Board that "missions" became an organizational Section of work that would

define its own goals for the accomplishment of the kingdom vision that had founded the Board. A brief history of the development of the Missions Section is needed to complete the picture and to also demonstrate ways in which the dichotomizing of mission and evangelism has led to confusion about reaching the culture today.

Basal Manly, Sr. of Alabama was chosen as the first president of the Domestic Mission Board and J.L. Reynolds as corresponding secretary, however Manly had trouble keeping focus due to his duties as president of the University of Alabama.(*SBC Annual* 1845) Manly's corresponding secretary resigned within a month of election and Daniel Bestor, Sr. was elected to replace Reynolds.(:18) However, Bestor resigned within a few months also. These reversals hindered Manly's leadership and he also resigned in less than a year of his presidency. The agency's 1846 report stated: "These changes in the acting officers of the Board almost paralyzed its efforts, and at one time threatened its overthrow."(1846:30) Much of the controversy seemed to focus around the concern of lack of support among the churches. It seems that the churches believed the agency was a good idea but when time came to support its work, the churches failed to do so. However, the Board kept moving forward to accomplish its mission, especially with regard to evangelistic thrust.

Russell Holman was elected in December, 1845 and provided leadership for five years. During his tenure the Board appointed six missionaries to the states of Texas, Florida, Virginia, and Alabama. Later in the year eight more missionaries were appointed and agents

were appointed to go to the field to gather support for the work.(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:19-23)

In May of 1847 Holman presented the findings of a study of the religious condition of the southern states. He urged the Convention to support increased evangelistic work in the new settlements of the West, in the older communities of the South and a more concentrated effort among Negroes. He had found that there were ten million persons in the South with one third of them persons of color. By 1850 Holman had written of his concern in the *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal:*

> Many places do not receive a visit from a minister of the gospel for many consecutive years. Not a few persons of mature years have never seen a minister of Christ and are as ignorant of the plan of salvation as are the heathen. This destitution is daily increasing as the increase of the population exceeds the efforts to spread the gospel. The field is not only destitute of the gospel, but it is infested with ruinous errors of almost every form.(1846:24)

The Board, located in the South, could hardly ignore the realities of reaching persons of color with the gospel. By 1853 the Board was urging action. Rutledge and Tanner record the early outreach efforts by the Board as it promised "If any association or church desire to have a mission among the Africans, and are willing to raise at least one-half the expense, your Board will, as far as it consistently can, assist to the remainder . . . ."(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:135) Two years later the Board reported six missions to the colored people. According to Rutledge and Tanner "The effect of these efforts was that in 1859 the Board reported that an estimated three

hundred thousand to four hundred thousand Negroes were professing Christians."(ibid.)

Holman resigned in July, 1851 and the Board turned to Thomas Fenner Curtis, professor at Howard College, who served two years.(ibid.) Curtis was in constant friction with the Board's members who complained of his scholarly approach to mission. He seemed to be unable to administer the Board's work to the members' approval and apparently had inadequacies in public relations. Baptists were more eager to follow a preacher with passion than a reflective scholar; therefore, Curtis was confronted with the need to resign.

Joseph Walker was appointed to follow Curtis. He had been a missionary and a pastor who was described by those who knew him as "well known to the denomination and a good preacher."(:22) Under his leadership the Board's responsibilities were enlarged as they acquired the work of the American Indian Mission Association in 1855. The Board was re-named the Domestic and Indian Mission Board. Baptists in the South had sought to win the Indians to Christ before the Southern Baptist Convention was organized. Various associations had appointed their own missionaries to Indian work, but with the merger of the American Indian Mission Board to the Domestic Mission Board came controversy. Many believed that the work of Indian missions and domestic missions conducted by the same board would work to the detriment of each agency. Secretary Walker urged the Board to move ahead saying in the *Home and Foreign Journal:*

> They need not conflict, and they will not, if churches and friends of these enterprizes (sic) will keep the Board in funds . . . The Domestic Board did not seek or ask for the Indian Missions, but being selected by the Convention as the preferred agency to conduct this business, they will do it to the best of their ability. But the Baptists all over the land owe it to themselves, to the Indians, to the immense multitudes in the home fields, above all to Christ, to be prompt and liberal just at the present time . . . .(1855:1)

When the transfer of work was made to the Board it discovered the Indian agency had financial liabilities of more than $12,000 dollars. Much of the money was owed to missionaries currently on the field. Walker set out to pay the debt traveling all over the South raising money. Within a year the debt was retired, but so was Walker. He resigned in 1856 weary from his work but satisfied with the progress of the Board's work.(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:23-28)

Again the Board turned to Russell Holman who was pastor in Alabama. He was again elected to serve the Board as its corresponding secretary and began his second term on January 1, 1857. But a serious eye complication would hamper his work during his second term. He tried to resign but the Board would not hear of it. Despite its early beginnings with controversy over its role, financial strictures and four leaders with short tenures, the Board pushed ahead. But another problem far more serious would halt the work of the Board. The Civil War loomed on the horizon in 1860 and nearly brought collapse to the Board's work.(:30-39)

In 1860 the missionary force had declined from 159 missionaries to a low of thirty-two in 1863. Missionaries had found themselves in

such danger during the ferment of the war years that many went home. In 1862 Holman resigned due to his eye ailment while the clouds of war were gathering. Martin Sumner was elected to replace Holman.(ibid.)

The Board's resources were nearly gone as a result of the war. Many missionaries assigned to the army served without pay. What little funding the Board received was channeled toward work with soldiers in the war. At the height of the war seventy-seven missionaries were engaged with the armies. Extensive revival swept through the camps and there were thousands of conversions.

There were serious problems in the nation as a result of war. By 1865 the South was bankrupt. The Board's assets had been in Confederate funds and were of no value. Kentucky Baptists, however, came to the rescue of the Board and invited the Board to solicit funds from the Kentucky churches. Soon, funds began to trickle into the work of the Board. Unfortunately more financial setbacks occurred, and the Board's work moved very slowly.(ibid.)

By 1873 the Convention moved to an action which would impose another burden upon the work of the Board. It decided to consolidate its struggling publishing agency with the Board. The Board was re-named the Domestic and Indian Mission Board and Sunday School Board. A year later the name was shortened and it became the Home Mission board, a name it carried until another re-organization in 1997.

The Sunday School Board brought further debt to the Domestic Mission Board. The Sunday School Board had published *Kind Words,* a magazine that had plunged them into a debt of over $20,000 dollars.

The Home Mission Board tried to pay all of its debts before making any new mission advances and the work slowed down as a result. By 1875 the number of missionaries had once again declined to fifty-one. Rutledge and Tanner indicate "Southern Baptists church membership had doubled during the previous fifteen years, but their home mission program had declined."(1969:33) Severe criticism was focused at the Board, and Sumner, its leader, was not re-nominated. The Convention cited poor financial management and indebtedness and retrenchment of the work as reasons. It seemed that the Convention was unwilling to face the fact that their own decisions to take on added burdens with struggling agencies that it included into its mission work had played a great part in the financial burdens the Board.

At the same Convention, Basil Manly, Jr. was elected to succeed Sumner. However, Manly could not attend the Convention and declined the post. The Convention then elected William McIntosh as its leader. His primary task at hand was the reduction of debt. But the efforts to place the Home Mission Board on solid financial ground brought further reductions in mission advance. Although caution ruled McIntosh's tenure, several occasions urged the Board to become more aggressive in its mission advance. By 1877 the conservative approach of the Board and the desire to place the board on a firmer financial foundation had further reduced missionaries on the field to only twenty-two.(ibid.)

By 1882 some progress had been made to place the Board on a stronger financial foundation. The Convention, however, felt that the

work located in Marion, Alabama was being hampered and needed a fresh new start. The Convention met in session and decided to move the Board to Atlanta, Georgia and to choose a new slate of directors and a new corresponding secretary. The Convention paid high praise to the current leadership and board of directors of the Home Mission Board, but insisted on a new beginning.

The Home Mission Board had been under constant criticism for its work. Even though the Convention wanted to pursue missions in principle the churches and states often maintained an antagonistic relationship with the agency. Rutledge and Tanner explain that "One of the weakening factors had been the unwillingness of many state mission boards to cooperate with the Home Board."(:37) Most of the states themselves needed help with missions and the Home Board was often unable to provide the help due to its financial constraints.

The Convention elected Isaac Taylor Tichenor as its leader. Tichenor would not make the same mistakes his predecessors had made. He decided to overcome the opposition in the states toward the Board by traveling to every state convention and by building support for the Board from within the states. As a result cooperation was widespread. Rutledge and Tanner demonstrate the cooperation by saying that "By 1887 every southern state had begun cooperation with the Home Board, and there was not a missionary to the white people in the South who was not commissioned by the Home Mission Board or one of the cooperating state conventions."(:41)

By 1884 the work of the Board had expanded to offering church building loan funds. Two years later the Board expanded its work into Cuba when the Foreign Mission Board decided that the Home Mission Board could best direct the work. The Board encouraged the establishment of the Woman's Missionary Union as an agency designed to raise funds for mission causes. By 1891 the Board had broadened the publishing of materials for the churches to the extent that the work of literature publication could be transferred to the new Sunday School Board, located in Nashville, Tennessee. By the close of Tichenor's leadership, the agency was firmly established. Tichenor retired in 1899 and was described as one of the greatest statesmen and most aggressive leaders Southern Baptists had ever had.(:43)

Franklin Kerfoot was elected to succeed Tichenor. However, he died in office in 1901 of a heart attack. The Convention expressed its sense of great loss with Kerfoot's untimely death but proceeded to elect Fernando Coello McConnell as the leader of the Home Mission Board. Although praised as a great leader, McConnell's heart was not in the Board. It was in the pastorate. After only 21 months in office he resigned to go back to a local church pastorate.(:44)

Baron DeKalb Gray was elected leader, or corresponding secretary as the post was named, in 1904. Under his leadership the Board again made gains. New types of work began to emerge. Efforts to establish mission work in the mountains of Appalachia and work in Panama met with success. The department of evangelism was formally established in 1906 with a staff of revival preachers and musicians.(Kelley

1983:17) Advances in city missions, language missions and continued work with Negroes swelled the missionary number. Receipts climbed to over $200,000 in 1907 and never dropped below that level again. Southern Baptists continued to grow in numbers in spite of hardships including World War I. By 1919 the Convention's Seventy-five Million Campaign focused on carrying the gospel throughout the world and sought a goal of $75 million dollars for the greatest advance of missions in the century. By 1921 the Board's assets had climbed to $1.6 million dollars. All seemed to be going well until the Great Depression and financial scandal plunged the Board into financial crisis in 1928. The Board's trusted treasurer, C.S. Carnes disappeared in August, 1928 with $909,461 dollars of the Board's money. The Board was devastated and was forced to lay off missionaries. The department of evangelism was closed. Once again, the Board faced a dark hour. The solution to the problem was for the Board to be re-organized and to focus on a new beginning.(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:45-60)

At its 1929 meeting the Convention selected John Benjamin Lawrence to head the re-organized Board. Most of his tenure was focused toward reduction of the Board's huge debt. Several creative attempts were made to raise money; however progress was slow due to the slowdown in the economy of the nation as a whole. Little by little the debts were paid until 1943 when the Board became debt free.(:61)

As the Board moved toward financial strength the mission corps increased. The department of evangelism was re-opened and efforts to engage in creative forms of ministry were advanced including the opening of the Sellers Home and Adoption Center, a home for unwed mothers which also provided an adoption service. Chaplaincy ministry was added to the Board in 1941 and a full staff of leaders led the work in city missions and in the conducting of schools of mission across the country.

During 1943-1953 the agency moved into creative approaches to mission advance. A rural church program was established, a western missions program, programs for juvenile delinquency and broken homes, and ministries to military personnel were added. New efforts in mission included the use of students for summer missions. Part-time missionaries were appointed as short-term volunteers. Pioneer mission fields were recognized and migrant missions expanded.(:65)

J.B. Lawrence had been occupied for nearly 14 years with debt recovery but the last 10 years of his ministry as leader of the Board were filled with growth. Under Lawrence the Board recovered respect and influence among the churches.(:69)

Samuel Courts Redford began his leadership of the Board in 1954. He had the privilege of leading the Board during the golden era of Southern Baptist growth. Under his leadership financial receipts tripled largely due to the growth trends in the nation and the Convention. The staff of the Board and the missionary force expanded greatly.(:70)

The Board participated in the Baptist Jubilee Advance of 1959-1964, an inter-Baptist and evangelistic observance of the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the founding in 1814 of the first national Baptist organization in the United States. Special emphasis on evangelism and an emphasis on establishing 30,000 new missions and churches during 1956-1964 fueled growth.(Kelley 1983:71)

The Board supported pioneer missions and mission personnel by paying salary and benefits in states where the work was not strong. Under Redford the Board moved into such a position of strength that it was fully able to implement a coordinated strategy of mission. It functioned cooperatively with the states but also pursued missions in accordance with its board of director's vision. A shift in agency structure and in the divisions of its work, however, soon began to develop.

The *Southern Baptist Convention Book of Reports, 1956* reports that at the 1956 Convention a recommendation to study the work of the agencies was formalized in the Committee to Study Total Program.(1956:44) As a result reorganization in 1959 of the Home Mission Board was the response to the Convention's call for the Board to strengthen its internal operations. Before 1959, the staff numbered thirty-two with the majority reporting to the executive secretary-treasurer. Reorganization changed the structure to the extent that new divisions and departments were established. Rutledge and Tanner write:

> The several department were gathered into five divisions, with the executive secretary-treasurer working primarily with the division directors and others related immediately to his executive staff. Thus all phases of mission work were placed in the Division of Missions, thereby terminating the Departments of Direct and of Cooperative Missions and making departments of some ministries previously administered within these two departments. All evangelism assignments were located in the Division of Evangelism, all chaplaincy ministries in the Division of Chaplaincy, all church loan operations in the Division of Church Loans, and all public relations activities in the Division of Education and Promotion. (1969:74-75)

As a result of the reorganization the Board began to reflect more of a corporate design. The movement toward a corporate design within agencies had begun at the Sunday School Board prior to the Convention's call for a study of the need. Jesse Fletcher notes "In 1954 (James) Sullivan led the Baptist Sunday School Board to hire the consultant firm of Booz, Allen, and Hamilton to study the board and recommend reorganization."(1994:197) The reorganization of the Sunday School Board in 1954 influenced sister agencies, thus, when the Convention's call for a study of the total program was initiated a precedent at the Sunday School Board was already in place. Commitment to modern management practices emerging in post-war corporate environments "influenced all Southern Baptist agencies."(:198)

During 1965 the Evangelism Division was moved to Atlanta from Fort Worth-Dallas where it had been since 1946. The work of migrant missions was moved to Atlanta from Dallas and the work of National Baptists in Oklahoma City was moved to Atlanta. By 1966 all of the

Board's staff were in the same office in Atlanta for the first time in more than 20 years.(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:221)

When Redford retired his tenure had seen the Home Mission Board fully develop into a powerful mission sending agency. Fellow workers noted his accomplishments which were in part a reflection of the overall growth of Southern Baptist work in all areas. Charles Standridge summed up the times by saying:

> There has been . . . an entire reevaluation of home missions by our Southern Baptist Convention as a whole. It has moved from being a stepchild to a position where it is equal to and as much appreciated as the duty of the church and the mission of our Lord as any other responsibility, far or near.(1964:17)

Arthur B. Rutledge followed Redford in January 1965.(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:76) Rutledge had been director of the missions division under Redford. By the beginning of his tenure over 2,000 missionaries were on the field. The expansion of Southern Baptist mission into all parts of the nation was underway. Although Redford left Rutledge in a stronger position than any other leader to carry forth his leadership three administrative concerns were at hand.(:77)

The board's program statement needed to be completed and presented to the Convention. Staff needed to be re-aligned and plans and goals for the years ahead needed to be set forth. A task force began to study the needs and prepared to make a report of the program statement to the Convention. In the 1966 Convention session the report was given to the churches.(ibid.)

The statement identified the Board's responsibilities in terms of twelve programs: evangelism development, chaplaincy ministries, church loans, establishing new churches and church type missions, associational administration service, pioneer missions, rural-urban missions, metropolitan missions, language missions, work with National Baptists, Christian social ministries, and work related to non-evangelicals.(Rutledge and Tanner 1969:78) Nine of these programs were grouped into the Division of Missions directed by Hugo H. Culpepper who joined the Home Mission Board Staff in January 1965. Culpepper's role as division director was a major step ahead in the elevation of missions from the Board. Instead of individual departments working independently, the division would have a more focused approach as a result of the grouping of programs. A further revision of its program statement in 1971 and approved in 1973 by the Convention gathered all of the Board's work under three sections: the Missions Section, Planning Section, and Services Section.(:78) In 1975 the Evangelism Section was elevated from division status. Again, Missions gained importance as a major thrust of the Board. Gerald Palmer was elected to serve as Missions Section director after Hugo Culpepper left to return to Southern Seminary in 1971. Palmer served the post until his retirement in 1990 and was succeeded by Charles Chaney.(*Note:* The writer of this thesis worked closely with Palmer and Chaney and noted firsthand the results of their leadership.)

Charles Chaney had been a church growth advocate and teacher prior to his joining the Board. Under his direction new efforts at

church starting continued. Chaney was a theologian who sought to bring to the Board a stronger theological foundation for the growth and development of churches. Chaney did not remain at the Board, however, but chose to retire when the Board was again re-organized in 1997.

Arthur Rutledge retired in 1976 and in 1977 William G. Tanner became president of the Home Mission Board.(*Note:* Observations of Tanner and Lewis' tenure are from notes made by the researcher as he worked under their leadership.)

Tanner's tenure was marked with further expansion of the work of the Board, especially in the divisions. Staff was added to the Board in areas that included the Mission Service Corps, a program of self-supported missionary personnel. The language department became a division of work as well as the mission ministries department. Christian Social ministry, Black Church relations, Interfaith Witness, and Special Mission ministries were included. The Evangelism Division and the Missions Division became Sections of work with major expansion of staff. The Evangelism section enlarged with a staff of special consultants addressing special evangelism concerns surfacing in the nation.

Under Tanner the theme of new frontiers surfaced as a guiding principle. The Board sought to be creative with regard to mission expansion and evangelism. The expanding role of women, bivocationalism, ethnic and language work, and a focus on the cities captured major attention at the Board. The Board continued under

Tanner to expand its corporate structure reaching into new areas unhinderedly.

Once again, however, the Board began to face difficult days ahead. In spite of unprecedented growth and promise, the fundamentalist movement began to capture the energy of the Board in early 1979 and continued until the eventual takeover of the agency with a new leader, Larry Lewis.

William Tanner left the Board in 1990 because of increasing tension during the controversy and became executive director of the Oklahoma Baptist state convention. Larry Lewis was the person that the fundamentalists chose to pilot the takeover of the agency.

Lewis' tenure was marked with measured expansion. Unlike the days of Redford, Rutledge and Tanner, freedom to develop programs was limited by the board of director's political agenda rather than mission expansion as defined by the Board's corporate structure. Women at the Board were denied promotion and several were forced to leave under pressure. Conservative rhetoric permeated Board meetings. Several key staff members resigned as a result of the narrowed approach of the fundamentalists. The Board concentrated its work on starting churches as a main agenda item. Other areas of work were left to fend for themselves. The integrated approach of the Rutledge and Tanner years was now a thing of the past. Special interests such as the pro-life agenda, concerns about women in ministry, problems with interfaith witness, inerrancy issues, and increased focus on church starting narrowed the agenda. Every Section was impacted,

however, Lewis did not rule with a harsh hand. This became problematic for the conservative Board of Directors. They wanted more rapid progress in the dismissal of problematic leaders they identified at the Board. They also wanted the Board to move in directions totally in line with the Board's wishes. Lewis was reluctant to endorse many of their wishes preferring instead to let attrition take care of leaders who were deemed not appropriate to the political agenda and to move slowly with regard to controversial issues. Lewis was so consumed with the idea of starting churches that he often ignored the strong undercurrents of political maneuverings taking place from within the Board of Directors.

The climax of the takeover of the Home Mission Board by the fundamentalists occurred when the leadership of the Convention decided to restructure the entire organizational structure of the Convention's boards and agencies in June 1997. Larry Lewis was ousted as leader of the old Home Mission Board and Bob Reccord was named the leader of the new North American Mission Board. Once again, the Board used the opportunity for re-organization as a means to make change in keeping with the agenda of the Board of Directors. The result is that the agency has narrowed its staff through downsizing of programs and personnel that could not follow the fundamentalist agenda. The new missions agency is now fully reflective of the political agenda of the Board of Directors and conservative leadership from within the Convention.

The restructuring of the Home Mission Board into the North American Mission Board brought together several agencies that were downsized or eliminated in the SBC structure. The resources and most of the ministry assignments of the Home Mission Board, Brotherhood Commission, and Radio and Television Commission were assigned to the new mission board. Five sections of work were named. They include:

1. Mobilization and Mission Education: The section is charged with mission education, volunteer mobilization, publishing, marketing, media strategy and convention relations.

2. Broadcast Communications: The section is charged with distribution and marketing, production, and technical operations.

3. Evangelism: The section is charged with direct evangelism, interfaith evangelism, student evangelism, church evangelism, and ministry evangelism.

4. Church Planting: The section is charged with leadership enlistment and training, new congregation implementation, and strategy and resource development.

5. Strategy and Business Services: The section is charged with strategic coordination, strategic focus cities, associational strategies, and strategic planning support. (1997:4-5)

The new structure of NAMB is a radical departure from the Home Mission Board's structure where mission and evangelism were more broadly defined and where ministry occupied an equal status with mission and evangelism within the structure. Ministry has been moved exclusively within the evangelism structure of the new board and the emphasis of the new board is more focused toward strategy development.(1998)

The radical change of structure in the mission board has not been fully understood by most Southern Baptists. The decision for change was initiated at the corporate level of SBC life. According to the new board's president, Bob Reccord "NAMB's organizational structure was created last year almost in a vacuum knowing that some adjustment would be necessary."(1997:4) His words were meant to explain the dynamic process of adjusting the staff and assignments at the new board, however, for most SBC churches the changes did in fact occur within a vacuum.

3.7 The Work of the Foreign Mission Board.

The Domestic Mission Board's emphasis on mission and evangelism was thoroughly dichotomized in the divisions and sections of its work. The Foreign Mission Board, however, integrated evangelism and mission more thoroughly. The mission field demanded that missionaries attend to a more wholistic approach. Although missionaries were appointed that focused on evangelism, most of them envisioned evangelism as central to their task of mission.

In the early days of the convention's establishment of mission boards, the task of getting the agency started was left to Jeremiah Bell Jeter who was charged with the promotion of the board's work. During the first year of operation, Jeter sought to begin the appointment of missionaries for the field. He was also charged with finding a permanent corresponding secretary to be the executive

officer of the new board. It would be no easy task as many candidates turned down Jeter's request for them to serve as leader of the board.

Jeter and his board picked China as the first field in which Southern Baptists would attempt to establish work.(Estep 1994:62) Several missionaries who had previously served with the Triennial Convention offered themselves for service. I.J. Roberts who had been serving in China with the Triennial Convention offered himself to the new convention. In less than six months after its organization, the board had employed its first missionary. Soon other candidates followed.

The need for a permanent leader for the Foreign Mission Board was apparent. The board finally selected James B. Taylor to serve as the executive officer of the board. He became corresponding secretary in 1846 and served until 1871. Taylor's task of collecting money for the agency was paramount. While the new missionary appointees were enthusiastic finances were virtually non-existent.(:75)

Other problems had to be encountered under Taylor's leadership. One of the most significant problems was the Landmark movement led by J.R. Graves. Landmarkism was a movement of anti-missions that challenged the convention on the basis of Graves' understanding of the New Testament. Graves who was editor of *The Tennessee Baptist* and pastor of Nashville's First Baptist Church had a loyal following who separated from the church and formed what Graves called "the true First Church."(:91)

Graves challenged the Foreign Mission Board in 1859 for its work as a mission sending agency. Graves defended his group's position by saying:

> The scriptural plan is clearly exemplified in the New Testament, and it is simple and effectual, and the sooner we return to it as a denomination, the better for us and for the world. We do not believe that the Foreign Board has any right to call upon the missionaries that the churches send to China or Africa, to take a journey to Richmond to be examined touching their experience, call to the ministry, and soundness in the faith. It is a high-handed act, and degrades both the judgement and authority of the church and presbytery that ordained him, thus practically declaring itself above both. (Baker 1974:216-217)

A committee was appointed to address Graves' concerns and brought a report to the convention that satisfied Graves. The report did not change the board's policy or operations with regard to appointing missionaries but did allow for churches to appoint their own missionaries if they wished. The report satisfied Graves although he continued to be a vocal opponent to the work of the board.

The Civil War (1861-1865) nearly crippled the board. Finances to support the work of the missionaries declined sharply. The board found itself in debt but managed to continue operations with income from Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri whose churches had used federal currency during the war years instead of Confederate money which after the war was worthless.

James Taylor died in December, 1871 and the board chose H.A. Tupper to take over the tasks of Taylor. Tupper was from a wealthy

family in Charleston, South Carolina and had served as the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Washington, Georgia.(Estep 1994:115)

Tupper was a man of organizational ability. He was disturbed by the constant need for fund raising and attempted to formulate a plan for the support of foreign missions that would enlist Baptists in every church and state convention. Estep explains that "He called for each state association or convention to establish a missions committee in cooperation with the Foreign Mission Board."(:118) His suggestion would take another 15 years to be implemented, but it would be the women of the churches who would establish the missions committees through their work to establish the Woman's Missionary Union. The WMU became the strongest supporter of missions and to today support the work of mission with two offerings given in the churches annually: the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions. According to the *Southern Baptist Convention Book of Reports, 1998* together the offerings annually raise more than 175 million dollars for missions.(1998:21)

Tupper's tenure ended in 1893 and the board appointed R.J. Willingham to succeed him. Willingham was pastor of First Baptist Church of Memphis, Tennessee when he was notified that the board had unanimously elected him the corresponding secretary.(Estep 1994:159) Willingham loved the pastorate and as Estep says "nothing less than a missionary world vision could have moved Willingham from the pastorate to an administrative position with the Foreign Mission Board."(:162)

As administrator, Willingham found the problem of finances to be a heavy burden. Debt plagued the board. Even though generous contributions came to the board from persons of wealth, the burden of supporting the missionaries was a heavy one. When the convention met in Chattanooga in 1896 the committee on finances of the Foreign Mission Board gave its report warning the convention that if finances did not improve, the possibility of recalling missionaries from the field would be forthcoming.(:164) The shock wave caused the convention to show a new determination to rid the board of its debt. Estep indicates that "this was particularly evident when Georgia Baptists met in their annual state convention the following year."(ibid.) Georgia raised $10,000 to be used to support both the Domestic and Foreign boards. Soon other states followed and in June 1989, the Foreign Mission Board's debts were paid in full.(:165)

J. Franklin Love followed Willingham as leader of the Foreign Mission Board in 1915. Love had served as state secretary of missions in Arkansas and had also served as a pastor. Love led the board through efficiency studies which sought to focus the work of the board and he unified the board through the Seventy-five Million campaign which was an effort to raise 75 million dollars for missions in five years and to baptize a million new converts. The campaign was not just a financial drive but called upon the churches, Baptist colleges, and seminaries to ask the students to publically dedicate themselves to full time Christian service. More than four thousand young people responded. As Estep records it the Seventy-five Million campaign did

something no other campaign had done. Estep says it "welded a diverse people into a denomination . . . . Never before had so many young people volunteered for missionary service nor had so many Southern Baptists been involved in sacrificial giving for the cause of Christ."(:203)

The wave of optimism did not last long, however. In spite of the inauguration of the Cooperative Program in 1925, a funding mechanism that supported the entire work of Southern Baptist causes, the depression of 1929 brought severe hardship to the work of the board. Only two years earlier George N. Sanders had swindled the Foreign Mission Board out of $103,772.38. Coupled with the depression, the financial position of the board was damaged significantly.(:208)

Love's tenure was not without controversy. W.O. Carver, professor of missions at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, served on the Foreign Mission Board for two three year terms (1917-1923). He served on the board at the time that Love headed the administration of the foreign mission strategy for the board. Carver severely criticized Love's approach to mission.

Love's basic premise for mission was built upon the idea that God had called Paul to go to Europe rather than Asia. (1912:15) John Jonsson described Love's strategy as one of Anglo-Saxon supremacy. (1990:6) Love believed it necessary for the white races to be Christianized first in order for them to evangelize the world. (ibid.) W.O. Carver was quick to denounce Love's policies believing that Southern Baptists needed to move away from such enculturated

mission policies which he believed were "a rationalized justification of the racial pride, the economic greed, and the ambition of power which are the unconfessed urges of imperialism."(Carver 1942:37) W.O. Carver was ecumenical in spirit and identification. According to Jonsson he refused to curtail his mission parameters to Southern Baptist parochiality.(1990:7) Carver was a voice outside the norm of Southern Baptist opinion regarding mission during the time. His ecumenical spirit led him to continue working across denominational lines even when the Foreign Mission Board moved away in 1919 from cooperation with the interdenominational Foreign Mission Conference of North America. Carver's actions drew the displeasure of Dr. J.B. Gambrell who served during the time as the President of the SBC. (ibid.)

Love retired and the board named Charles E. Maddry to serve. Maddry had served as a pastor and the executive secretary of the North Carolina Convention. He brought a wealth of denominational experience to the work of the Foreign Mission Board.(:221) Maddry traveled more than any other leader of the board. He visited the fields and brought the experiences of the missionaries back home to the churches.

Maddry guided the board through the perilous days of World War II and visited many of the countries that were at war. He tried to bring about reconciliation between the warring parties but was unsuccessful. His experiences in dealing with problems in various countries led him to appoint regional secretaries in countries to deal with problems and to serve as liaison with the board in Richmond, Virginia.(:230)

Maddry established *The Commission* magazine as a vehicle to keep the churches aware of missions around the world. He also developed a pension plan for retiring missionaries. Maddry did more than any of his predecessors to communicate the work on foreign fields to the churches.(:247)

Theron Rankin was elected by the board in 1945 to follow Maddry as he retired. Rankin had served as a missionary in China and was particularly equipped to lead Southern Baptists in a realistic appraisal of missions around the world.(:251) Rankin was the first foreign missionary to become an executive secretary of the Foreign Mission Board.(:252)

Estep, who has written the most definitive work on the Foreign Mission Board's history, said that Rankin was dedicated to promoting the indigenous principle in missions.(:253) A rising tide of nationalism made Rankin's contribution vital to the continued work of mission in China, for example. While noting that there were certain responsibilities that the Foreign Mission Board must attend to, Rankin believed that the Chinese should set the direction of the work on the field. Rankin believed that the work of the missionary was to be a seed sower and counselor and that the work would only continue if the leaders within the country directed it. Rankin wrote:

> . . . This emerging Baptist consciousness makes it necessary that in our missionary work we be able to die unto ourselves as an American denomination. We cannot expect the institutions and churches which we promote in the Orient to be extensions of the Southern Baptist denomination in America. In the institutions of training we cannot expect to train Chinese to be good Southern Baptists,

> but we must expect them to be good Chinese Baptists who will be able under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit to possess their own souls. (Weatherspoon 1958:77)

Rankin, while leading Southern Baptists to understand the principle of indigenization, also led them to understand the importance of working with other denominations. The missionaries on the field had often worked closely with missionaries from other denominations without formal comity agreements. Rankin felt that it was important to study the issue and that such a step was important to the future of the work of the board. The board, however, concerned about issues related to the National Christian Council in China voted to pursue ecumenical cooperation in informal ways. Estep indicates that Rankin did continue to work with various denominations on an unofficial basis.(Estep 1994:262) Rankin's secretary, Gene Newton, remarked "He would have liked very much to have had closer cooperation with the National Council of Churches but was held back by tradition."(ibid.) Rankin continued to work with various denominations and groups and guided the board through the turbulent years of WWII seeking ways to restore the work in the shattered countries left desolate by the war.

Rankin was succeeded by Baker James Cauthen in 1954. Cauthen, who had studied world religions in his doctoral work, was a missionary to China from 1939 to 1953. Almost immediately Cauthen was swept into action as the SBC voted the year 1956-57 as World Missions Year. In the emphasis Southern Baptists began a new missionary thrust in Africa and sought to combat the resistance from Islam and Roman

Catholicism.(:302) The emphasis of the World Missions Year gave rise a more significant emphasis for the years 1959-1964 called the Baptist Jubilee Advance. The emphasis would celebrate the 150th anniversary of a common missionary heritage of Baptists in the United States. For the Foreign Mission Board, the emphasis breathed new life into world mission advance.(:303) New goals were set for 2,000 missionaries to be appointed. This was an unprecedented expansion of SBC missionary commitment. Cauthen kept on challenging Southern Baptists throughout his tenure. By the end of the Jubilee Advance he called for a missionary force of five thousand.(ibid.) Cauthen's era was marked with expansion. Southern Baptists grew in wealth and their agencies grew as well. New types of missionaries were added to the appointment list with missionary associates designed for those over the age of thirty-five who wanted to serve overseas but who could not be appointed as career missionaries, and missionary journeymen who served overseas for two years. Disaster relief and various social ministries were added to the missionary vocation under Cauthen. Cauthen also worked to emphasize the importance of laypersons who could serve on the field for short periods of time. By the time Cauthen retired, Southern Baptists had grown to nearly 3,000 missionaries in 94 countries. The board had grown in budget from 16 million to over 70 million dollars.

R. Keith Parks was elected to succeed Cauthen in 1980.(1998) His tenure would be marked by growth but also by controversy. Parks had served as a missionary in Indonesia from 1954 to 1968.

Parks was caught up in the largest evangelistic and mission endeavor Southern Baptists had ever conceived. *Bold Mission Thrust* was an emphasis adopted by the convention in 1979 which sought to carry the gospel to every person on earth by the year 2000. Parks responded by organizing the board for a global strategy. Task forces were developed that focused on trends developing in various countries. Every effort was made to discover new mission opportunities to advance the gospel.

Parks worked to achieve the goals of Bold Mission Thrust, but controversy in the convention plagued the efforts. Conservatives in the convention voted to withdraw funding from the Foreign Mission Board's work at the seminary in Ruschlikon. The conservatives were critical of the faculty's teachings at the seminary. Theological divisions were many. Conservatives also did not support the high cost of supporting the seminary at Ruschlikon.(Estep 1994:361) Parks tried to defend the work at the seminary because of the damage he felt would be caused to the work of missions in Europe. The issue became a matter of conscience for at least two key leaders at the Foreign Mission Board who resigned in protest.(:362) Other resignations came in the wake of the initial two. The increasing controversy, however, led to increasing tension between Parks and his board of trustees. The conservative takeover of the FMB was apparent to Parks who knew that he had lost his support among them.(:361) Parks resigned in October 1992.

Jerry Rankin, a veteran missionary and area director for Southeast Asia was elected to replace Parks in 1993. According to Estep "the heart of Rankin's vision for the Foreign Mission Board is what he perceives to be its God-given task . . . This task involves mission and evangelism."(:381) Under Rankin the Foreign Mission Board was re-structured and re-named the International Mission Board in 1998.

3.8 Implications.

It can be seen from the brief historical overview that the impact of evangelism is strong within the Foreign Mission Board, Home Mission Board and the Convention as a whole. It can also be observed that the Mission Boards struggled for legitimacy and may not have survived had it not been for the impact of evangelistic fervor associated with the Boards' work. The eventual development of the Missions section at the Home Mission Board placed missions on a more equal footing with evangelism in the work of the Board, although, that move was very slow to develop. At the Foreign Mission Board evangelism was more naturally incorporated into the work of the agency.

There are three implications that can be drawn from the history of the development of evangelism and mission within the Convention. First, the fervor of evangelism gave Southern Baptists a reason for being on mission. Although Southern Baptists did not equate mission with evangelism, it is clear that their passion for the gospel propelled Southern Baptists to make mission their priority. Indeed,

from earliest days home missionaries gave major attention to evangelism. (Rutledge and Tanner 1969:216) Major attention to evangelism was also found within the foreign mission effort. Those leaders who helped found the Convention believed that evangelism was the primary reason Southern Baptists would embrace mission as a central concept within the organization. The commitment to the work of the evangelism department at the Home Mission Board continued to rise to the surface of the Convention's concern even though the blight of wars, financial problems, and changing politics mitigated against it. Arthur B. Rutledge and William G. Tanner's comprehensive history of Home Missions among Southern Baptists acknowledges the importance with which Southern Baptists hold evangelism in the title of the 14th chapter of their book, *Mission to America.* The chapter is titled "The Purpose of It All: Evangelism".(1969:216-227)

Southern Baptists are a people who believe that the gospel must be carried to those who are deemed to be lost. Rhetoric would imply that every program and agency of the Southern Baptist Convention functions with the goal of evangelism in mind. Therefore, evangelistic rhetoric tends to color every aspect of the work of the Convention. Evangelistic goals are established by the agencies to prove the legitimacy of the programs as extensions of the local church's ministry to the unevangelized. Not many Baptists realize the debate that took place when the Convention decided to establish a department of evangelism. Churches embroiled in the debate felt an established department of evangelism would dampen the local church's

commitment to evangelism. Had it not been for B.H. Carrol's impassioned speech to the Convention, the churches might have prevailed. Yet the agencies prevailed and a corporate pattern was set that elevated evangelistic fervor to a Convention priority thus lessening the focus on the individual church's responsibility. Increased evangelistic rhetoric fueled by a staunch conservative agenda ensures that the corporate focus on evangelism will continue for years to come. The danger, however, is that evangelism as an emphasis directed by the Convention's agencies will continue to be defined by the agencies instead of the churches. Given that the emphasis on evangelism has been monolithic, that is, focused in the direction of confrontational evangelism and revivalism, the probability is that this trend will continue despite the culture's disdain for it. If the churches directed the work of evangelism in local communities the chances are that the gospel would have a better chance to be contextualized within the community and would lend itself to more creative approaches. But as long as the Convention designs evangelistic programs which it franchises to the churches, the pattern is unlikely to change.

A second implication is similar in construct to the first. The pattern of mission development is also agency directed. Local churches have little incentive to be on mission as long as they can simply send their money to an agency and have the work done for them. Rhetoric related to missions involvement by the Convention is as strong as that of evangelistic rhetoric. Missions and evangelism are

prominent in the list of core values adopted by the newly named North American Mission Board and the newly named International Mission Board. Saying that the core values determine what the agencies will be and what they will do, the North American Mission Board published eight values they will abide by. The Southern Baptist Convention Book of Reports, 1998 demonstrates the rhetoric surrounding missions and evangelism involvement:

> Obedience: We will be on mission with God, and we will help missions personnel and other "on mission" Christians to obediently fulfill God's call to make disciples.
>
> Urgency: We will be urgently on mission with God, focusing our lives and our work on faithful and effective evangelism which results in new disciples.(1998:116)

The rhetoric that surrounds the core values often present conflicts of opinion as to the levels of priority for each. Within the North American Mission Board there is constant debate about that tension. Those who are advocates of evangelism believe all that the Board does should be evangelistic in nature. Those who work in the missions departments believe that evangelism should be left to the advocates of it. Missions personnel often feel pressured by the Board's directors to define missions in terms of evangelism, however, the evangelists are not pressured to define evangelism in terms of mission. Therefore, tension and competition is a reality within the agency.

Tony Campolo, sociology professor at the American Baptist Eastern College in Pennsylvania has focused his criticism upon Southern Baptists for letting the agencies do what the church should be doing

in terms of mission. Campolo says in the *Alabama Baptist* "Rather than pooling money and resources to send Americans into other countries to "do things their way," Campolo would like to see Southern Baptists empower the locals and assimilate into the culture."(1998:8) However, this is not likely to occur since the domestic and foreign mission boards function in many ways like government agencies who require taxes to be paid to support them. In Baptist life in the South, the "taxes" are received through the Cooperative Program and endowments that guarantee the future of the mission sending agencies.

The concept of the agencies and their leaders is that the agencies must facilitate the work of the local churches. International Mission Board President Jerry Rankin maintains missions-sending agencies such as the IMB will never lose their prominence ". . . because the local church must have their help."(ibid.) Rankin's attitude toward the local church's ability to involve itself in mission without being dependent on national agencies is indicative of the problem. Southern Baptists have created in the churches a culture of dependency on agencies that will be difficult to break. Although a number of churches have begun to involve themselves in direct mission activity the majority of the churches still rely upon the agencies for mission outreach. Until the churches are able to break away from dependency and see themselves as called to mission little will be done in terms of missions at the local, state, or national levels. Churches that are discovering they can be on mission in their own localities and around the world without

dependency on the agencies are reporting renewed vigor in the membership and optimism for the role of the church in the world. However, those churches are the exception to the rule. Southern Baptists must envision a shift in paradigm away from dependency on the agencies with regard to evangelism and missions and toward a more personal involvement beginning at the local level and moving toward the world.

A third implication rests on the assertion that past successes in the Southern Baptist programs of mission and evangelism do not necessarily guarantee successes in the future. While the development of the evangelism programs and the missions programs in the SBC often struggled to survive in the early days of development, they have now reached corporate strength. The vast amounts of money held by the agencies and given each year by the churches seem to promise that Southern Baptists can accomplish any goal set for evangelistic and mission actions within the culture. The successes of the past 25 years in Southern Baptist church growth and the growth of the agencies has lulled Southern Baptists into believing that the future will hold similar successes. Yet, the culture is changing rapidly. Christendom is dissolving. Baptists find themselves in a new world but they still function as if it is the world of 25 years ago. The optimism fueled by past successes and multi-million dollar budgets will not help Baptists in the South listen to the culture or take contextualization issues seriously. If they feel they have all the resources needed and know better than the culture what it needs, the re-inforcement of the

Christendom model will be as serious a problem in the culture of the future as it has been in the past.

Alister McGrath has said "The future belongs to those who can relate the heritage of the past to the realities of the present." (1995:112) This is the lesson Southern Baptists need to learn from their history. The missions and evangelism programs evolved alongside the culture in the early days of Southern Baptist life. The culture certainly permitted it to do so. Today the culture has embraced secularism over the religious orientation of the past. The history of missions and evangelism in Southern Baptist life suggests capability to adapt and to be open to the context in which it finds itself. What is needed for the future is a proactive commitment to the context and not simply a commitment to repeating the solutions of the past.

Chapter Four

Biblical Foundations for Mission and Evangelism

4.1 New Impetus for Mission and Evangelism.

Southern Baptists believe themselves to be people of the Scripture. They tend to profess that the Bible is their guide and that the story of the early church fervor for missions and evangelism is their model for action. It would be helpful, therefore, to explore ways in which the early church and individuals attempted to carry the gospel to their world. From such a brief study will come insights that can inform and perhaps direct more clearly the task at hand in today's world.

In many ways the ancient world of the New Testament Christian is analogous to our contemporary world. Potential for opportunities as well as hostilities were evident in the New Testament world. The New Testament Christian lived in a poly-theistic world with a powerful government structure and amid both affluence and poverty. Today's world exhibits similar characteristics. Neo-paganism, secularism, various world religions, racism, poverty, and powerful government forces all combine to place the American Christians of today in a similar context. While the *Pax Romana* made it possible for the Roman Empire to tolerate various religions, including the Jews and Christians, today's culture tolerates all religions but pays little attention to them. Indeed, the post-modern era with its inherent

fragmentation is more like the ancient world than the modern world with its systematized structures. Therefore, studying the mission of the early church offers promise to persons today who wish to be on mission in a world filled with challenges.

Kenneth Scott Latourette demonstrates that Christianity's successes were due to the efforts of individual or lay Christian missionaries.(1937:116-120) Latourette says "The chief agents in the expansion of Christianity appear not to have been those who made it a profession . . . but men and women who earned their livelihood in some purely secular manner and spoke their faith to those whom they met in this natural fashion."(:116) Latourette continues to explain that travelers and slaves, merchants and professional people made constant contact with the general population and spoke of their faith.(:117) Latourette quotes Origen, as support for the work of individuals in the spread of Christianity, who criticized the spread of Christianity by "workers in wool and leather and fullers and uneducated persons who get hold of children privately and of ignorant women and teach them . . . ."(:116-117; Origen *Contra Cels* III:55)

E. Glenn Hinson has suggested, however, that while individuals did play a significant role in the expansion of the early church, their institutional life made it possible for the mission of the early Christians to attract and enlist converts.(1981:10) Latourette's assertion that individuals were the primary component to the success of Christianity addresses a significant problem that many Southern Baptist church members seem to avoid: that is, individual

accountability to be on mission and to be proclaimers of the gospel. Almost no Christian today would admit to avoidance of personal involvement in mission, but it is clear from statistics (noted earlier in the thesis) that the sharing of the gospel by individuals in churches is a low priority. Many factors contribute to this problem; among them is the idea that the church body is able and will do the work necessary to evangelize the culture. Therefore, it becomes easy for the average Christian to simply focus energies upon worship and work within the church and feel that he/she is on mission. Evidence in the New Testament indicates that individual Christians did take personal responsibility for carrying the gospel to others within the context of their daily lives and that they did not depend upon the corporate church to do the work for them.

Hinson's assertion that the early churches were the primary contributors to the spread of Christianity places the responsibility for mission in today's world squarely at the feet of local churches and not their agencies. Hinson's argument does not negate the assertion that early Christians evangelized individually, rather, Hinson views the early church's witness and mission in terms of working together for the task of winning others. Since the trek of this thesis leans toward the church's calling to mission in the world the argument will at times work from Hinson's viewpoint. However, Latourette's position will also be elevated by way of application to the larger work of the churches.

4.2 The Experiential in the Individual.

Reports in the Scripture of individuals who seized opportunities for mission outreach are evident. Many of these encounters were not focused on the establishment of any church but instead the focus seemed to be on the individual convert or groups of individuals. Hinson explains "In some instances it is probable that individual witnesses, especially laypersons, secured conversions which did not lead to the formation of churches or to church affiliation."(1981:38) Phillip and the Ethiopian, Peter and Cornelius, the witness of Stephen, the Philippine jailer, and the witness of Paul are a few examples. There is evidence in later writings that this trend continued. Chadwick translates Origen, who told Celsus "that wool and leather workers, fullers, and uneducated persons spread the gospel everywhere, without specific reference to churches."(1953:3.55) Hinson indicates "Soldiers, sailors, merchants, artisans, and travelers of all kinds scattered the word all over the ancient world."(1981:66) Many evangelistic monks of the late fourth and fifth centuries went from place to place making converts. Prior to the establishment of churches in a locale there were individuals at work sharing their faith all over the Roman Empire of the first century. Hengel has pointed out that there was evidence in places like Damascus that Jewish Christians were already in the cities prior to the formation of churches. Hengel notes "Luke presupposes that there are already Jewish Christians there, and he mentions just one of them, Ananias, by name, additionally describing him as a pious

Jew."(1997:81) Luke even avoids the term *ekklesia* in Damascus when describing Paul's visit there obviously not wishing to suggest that a church was in place. It is rather possible that Luke is describing a community of believers in "the way", as seen in 9:2, to indicate that the community had not organized independently from the synagogue community. According to Hengel "Presumably it met in one or more private houses as a kind of 'messianic conventicle', but at the same time it presumably also attempted to exercise influence on those who went to the synagogues."(1997:81) This is precisely why Paul had been given letters to go to Damascus in the first place. These members of "the way", had been disturbing the synagogue with their witness of Jesus and Paul was given letters of authority to go to the Synagogue at Damascus to try to bring order and rebut those causing the disturbances. So, evidence is apparent that individuals functioned in the cities at first, then as they found others of, "the way", joined together in the synagogues to share their faith. They met in homes to support their fellowship and their mission but remained primarily attached to the synagogues.

The combination of good roads, peace, and tolerance enabled people to travel and visit points of the Empire far removed from Jerusalem. Through their travels people carried the gospel witness as they traded and as they relocated from town to town. Later, Paul benefitted as a traveling missionary from the *Pax Romana* which guaranteed citizens relative freedom. The relative ease with which Paul could move from city to city led to a positive attitude toward

Roman rule which can be seen in Paul's writings in Romans 13:1-7. In the early days there was simply no reason to fear Rome to the extent that the early Christians feared the Jews who wished to persecute them. It is entirely possible that prior to the establishment of churches the Empire had numbers of individuals in the cities discovering others, in relative freedom of worship, who had become believers thus preparing the way for the gospel to evolve into larger groups of association and into churches. The importance of the emerging community cannot be overlooked as individuals linked themselves together and sought to make converts.

4.3 Growth Patterns in Communities.

Not only did individuals contribute to evangelistic and missional outreach, but it is apparent that the early New Testament community functioned as a vehicle for the gospel. As Christians moved within the culture they had opportunity to speak to others about their faith to the extent that ". . . most converts became acquainted with it through casual contacts . . . ."(Hinson 1981:49) Thus, the earliest Christian 'missionaries' formed ". . . small conventicles with their followers; one might even call them 'special synagogues' with offensive messianic doctrines."(Hengel 1997:88) The Christian communities were constantly vying with Judaism and the mystery cults to win converts to the faith. It is possible that the typical convert heard about Christianity by chance. Perhaps it was ". . . a word dropped by a friend or neighbor, witnessing a martyrdom, overhearing a

conversation . . . ." (Hinson 1996:63) In whatever case, the attraction to Christianity within the larger community was apparent. Persons in the various communities could not help but notice the love of the Christians for others. Charity was offered according to Hinson ". . . without expectation of return or consideration of merit; fellowship opened to all social levels--masters and slaves, men and women, young and old, rich and poor . . . ."(:64) The range of their love was evidently broad. They cared for widows and orphans, for the sick, for prisoners, for slaves, those unemployed and victims of calamities. The fellowship that the early believers shared openly with others was a powerful attraction. (:65)

The Christian's steadfastness in the face of persecution, their high moral standards, their assurance of victory over evils, and their assurance of salvation to come, were all factors that were noticed by the culture at large and contributed to the spread of the faith in this period.

Christian behaviour within the larger communities was also noticed. Pagans would often scrutinize the Christian moral character. In his letter to Trajan, Pliny reported a morally favorable impression of the Christians based on his investigation. Although he faulted Christians' "inflexible obstinacy," he found nothing "socially harmful in their meetings."(Hinson 1996:61) Galen, the physician, criticized Christianity for its philosophical naiveté, but expressed appreciation for Christian courage in the face of death.(:66)

Wherever persons traveled they found hospitality from the Christians. Their generous spirit would welcome weary travelers giving them opportunities to share the gospel in their homes. They took seriously Hebrews 13:2 lest they fail to comfort and aid "angels unawares". In time, there were some guidelines set for entertaining strangers such as those found in 2 John 10-11, but it is apparent that the Christians for the most part chose to err on the side of love for the stranger.

In Third John, for example, Gaius is commended for his hospitality to "the brothers and strangers . . . ." Diotrephes is condemned, not only for a lack of hospitality, but also from prohibiting those who wished to give it to do so.(3 John 5-10) The result was that Christianity developed an empire-wide network of Christian communities open to travelers and provided an opportunity for the gospel to further spread as a result of their hospitality.

4.4 Societal Inculturations in Christian Associations.

The flourishing of the Christian community and the emergence of its churches found precedence in the associations that were already in place in the Hellenistic world. The Roman imperial government left a large space in the life of its citizens that was not regulated by the government, nor did local administrations concern themselves with the social life of the people. Many of the significant societal infrastructures were left to the initiative of the people. Associations became the most important structural element in city

life.(Koester 1995:68) They played a role in the welfare and social care of their members.

The associations took on many forms. The dinner parties fostered symposia that were defined by shared interests such as ". . . particular forms of worship, professional bonds, neighborhoods, inherited descent, or political interests."(:68) These associations were critical to the social life of the people. Koester explains "It is difficult to imagine how anyone could play a political, social, or professional role in society, or for that matter have any fun, without membership in an association."(ibid.)

The Hellenistic period saw the greatest proliferation of associations. Most of them belonged to the middle class of the cities. There were gymnasiums, social clubs, professional guilds, and religious clubs dedicated to or named after a certain deity. Musical clubs, actors clubs, and dancers were organized. There was a great variety of professional associations. Koester says "These associations occupied privileged positions and in some places were organized under royal supervision. Their members served as teachers, so that these associations also functioned as schools for actors, dancers, and musicians."(:69)

The model of the association was an important vehicle not only for social life within the Empire, but enabled the Christian community to function alongside the other associations of the time. According to Koester "Religious associations were primarily founded for gods and cults that were not sponsored by the political community and so did

not have publicly recognized sanctuaries."(:70) These associations served as community structures for disseminating their faith. They would normally admit men regardless of their social class and would often admit slaves and women also. Koester indicates "Any of the members, even women or slaves, was allowed to occupy positions of leadership."(ibid.) Therefore, when the Christians met together with slaves, the poor, middle class persons, women, or any persons regardless of their social class, it was considered not unusual due to the large number of associations functioning within the culture. However, they were not entirely without suspicion. The Roman administration tried to regulate as many of the associations as they could, especially those they feared were seditious or for the purpose of drunken bouts.

Koester illustrates "Most suspicious were those that met at odd hours (Christians met early in the morning) and had leaders that were women and slaves."(:71.) But in spite of their suspicion, these associations functioned on a regular basis. Therefore, the presence of the association within the culture of the Empire contributed to the ability of the Christians to meet and to develop their associations into communities of faith. It is quite possible that established churches emerged out of many associations that met together for fellowship and support.

4.5 Mutuality of Faith in the Churches.

What may have begun at the local community association eventually extended outward via the universal fellowship of Christians and to the

edges of the Empire. According to Hinson "No one can determine empirically, of course, how much the Empire-wide link of the individual churches enhanced the process of evangelism, but it must have been considerable."(1981:51) The establishment of churches took Christianity a giant leap forward, far beyond what the individual missionary or community associations could accomplish. Christianity seems to have spread principally and normally through the planting of churches. Hinson says "These churches served as missionary communities which would evangelize and incorporate persons who were resident in their areas."(:33) In time, they spread outward to the extent that hardly any corner of the Empire was without a witness.

The procedure of planting churches probably originated in Paul's missionary strategy. His strategy for taking the gospel to a province was not to preach in every city or town himself, but to establish churches as centers of Christian life. These would be places from which the knowledge of Christ might radiate.(Allen 1960:12-16) Paul planted churches in towns and cities which were centers of Roman administration or of Greek or Jewish influence. Many were of commercial and military importance. Yet, how the churches were established by Paul is a matter that needs to be examined.

The attraction of the faith was apparent. Hengel says:

> The missionary effect of the Jewish synagogue worship, which had no sacrifices but rather with its prayer, hymn-singing, interpretation of scripture, and presentation of doctrine and ethical admonition in a sermon, was more like a philosophical assembly than

> the usual pagan worship involving a sacrifice, had an impact above all on members of the non-Jewish urban middle and upper classes. . . . (1997:61-62)

It was these pagan sympathizers that Luke calls, "God-fearers"(Acts 10). They were Gentiles with leanings towards the synagogue. They faithfully attended synagogue worship and observed the law as best they could. They concerned themselves with good works and tried to stay away from idolatry. Hengel says that "Luke depicts such people in a very positive way in the person of the centurion of Capernaum, Cornelius, Lydia the purple trader in Philippi, Jason in Thessalonica or Titius Iustus in Corinth."(:62) These were people among whom the formation of the churches in the Hellenistic world was a possibility and to whom Paul preached and with whom he worked to establish formal churches in the towns he visited.

As the Christians gathered together first as a loose association of new friends, then into larger communities or associations and as they began to meet outside of the synagogue in homes and other places, fertile ground was developed in which the zealot Paul could establish a church. According to Allen "Paul had by no means counted his work finished when he had preached and won a few converts. He took with utmost seriousness the task of church building, and the secret of his success lay in furnishing his converts as thoroughly as he could for their common life in Christ."(1960:81) Paul's missionary method of building churches meant that he would visit a town with a group of Christians gathered together and stay with them for a period of time

during which he would instruct them and equip them to function as an autonomous body. He would encourage their growth and expansion and when he left, often due to external circumstances, he would keep in touch with them by letter. Hinson explains "During his residence, he reinforced his initial preaching with teaching according to the early *paradosis,* with the observance of baptism (cf. 1 Cor.1:13ff.) and eucharist (cf. 1 Cor. 11:23-25), and with the establishment of a suitable order."(1981:34)

Paul was not satisfied simply to establish a church and to leave it to fend for itself with an occasional letter from him to offer support, encouragement, and guidance. Rather, he also thought of the churches in terms of a larger fellowship. Hinson says "Fundamentally, he did not draw a sharp distinction between the church universal and the individual community, however large or small; rather, he designated now one and now the other with the word *ekklesia.*"(:36) He believed the churches in a province were part of a larger unity. He personally tried to forge a bond between them by encouraging the sharing of his letters and by personal visits to them. He desired a spiritual communion between the churches as well as practical help in times of need, such as the relief offerings that he devised. J.F. Nickle says "For Paul the fulfillment of the Christian mission depended in large measure upon the actual unity of all churches within the one Body of Christ."(1966:37)

4.6 Implications for Mission.

The work of individuals and the subsequent establishment of the churches by early Christians can contribute to significant understandings for Southern Baptist's mission. First, the issue of the individual on mission must be addressed with new clarity. Given a culture that today is largely suspicious of religious organizations, it is more apparent than ever that individuals must re-claim a personal involvement in mission and evangelism. Unfortunately, the word *evangelism* has for many such a negative stereotype that they wish to stay clear of the concept all together. But *euanggelion* is a very important New Testament word. One could scarcely imagine the New Testament Christian as reluctant to tell what Christ meant to him/her personally.

It is clear that the religious orientation of the world of the Empire placed religious inquiry on a high level. It is just as high today. People today are seeking spiritual fulfillment in many directions. Persons in churches must be equipped to speak of their faith through the maze of misunderstanding, suspicion, distrust of Christianity, political correctness, and a number of other filters imposed by the culture. Many of the churches give no help to members who wish to share their faith within today's context.

A first step must be to focus on the spiritual dimension of the Christian life. Most Christians in churches today have never practiced the disciplines of a spiritual life. The teaching of spiritual formation in the churches may be of more importance than the traditional Sunday School classes which only teach the facts of the

Biblical narrative with some commentary by way of application. But spiritual formation could be fostered in small groups within the church and focused on what it means to be a Christian. The history of spiritual awakenings suggests that when persons are committed to fervent prayer and spiritual development radical changes take place in their sense of mission and evangelism. A somewhat recent example can be observed in the Asbury College revivals of the 1970's when fervent prayer, confession of sins, commitment to a recovery of spiritual passion, and personal discipleship led to an awakening that affected not only the college community but the town, state and nation.

The second step toward a renewal of personal accountability for mission and evangelism must be a serious examination of the culture itself. One suspects that most churches know little of the culture around them. Ron Dempsey says "The Christian church in the United States finds itself functioning within a society it no longer recognizes."(1997:79) Robert Bellah, commenting on the modern church's societal perception, wrote "Our socially constructed conception of how things really are is seriously out of date." (1989:77) If these observations are accurate, churches must become students of the culture and attempt to find ways to become important to the culture around them. Accountability to listen to the culture must be a commitment of the church. Every member of the church must be involved in dialogue with the culture of their communities. The agendas of the culture must be of concern to the churches. The reason that government today is so involved in public welfare issues is

largely due to the fact that the churches have abandoned such issues. One is reminded that in the wake of the great awakenings, schools, orphanages, aid societies, care for the poor, hospitals, and other benevolent ministries were established by the churches and by Christians who wished to see the gospel lived out not only in word, but also in deed. A recovery of the church's care for the culture is necessary if individual mission and evangelistic witness can ever take place with integrity.

A third step has to be accountability for individual mission and evangelism. Church members must be willing to be accountable to one another for the gospel they claim to believe. As it is now, a good church member is one who attends church services on a regular basis and who gives a tithe to the church. Without accountability for personal involvement with the gospel, the church can never break outside the walls that enclose it from the culture. The Apostle Paul often called for accountability among the members of the churches. Galatians and Ephesians are examples. The pagans of the Roman Empire were attracted to Christianity by the high moral standards and the love of the Christians for others. In today's culture it is not necessary to maintain high moral standards to be a member of a local church or in some cases to be its pastor. Those who think that the culture does not see the hypocrisy of such instances are avoiding reality. If the culture believed that the church took the Christian life seriously, it might notice the same things critics of the Christians noticed in the early days of Christianity.

These three steps are not exhaustive, of course. Much more must be done. But a recognition by the church that individual mission and evangelistic witness is possible in today's culture is vital. Many church members participate in the routine of worship as if personal mission involvement were not possible. The endless possibilities of being on mission must be held high in the life of the churches.

There are evidences of spiritual movements already happening across the world. A person does not have to look very far to engage others in conversation that illuminates this observation. An airplane flight might be an opportunity to meet someone from another country who is a Christian and who speaks of the advance of the gospel in her country. A meal with internationals might afford an opportunity to hear the stories. Kew and Okorocha explain:

> It might be a ". . . Chilean talking passionately
> about his outreach among professionals in Santiago;
> across the table sits a woman from Sierra Leone,
> a bishop from Mozambique, or someone from Scotland.
> At the next meal your companions could be a Palestinian,
> a Sri Lankan, or a young man with a burning zeal
> for Christ from the Pacific island nation of Tonga."
> (1996:33)

Experiences of this sort make it clear that the topic of Christianity is on the lips of people from nations all over the world. In fact, Kew and Okorocha prefer to illustrate such conversation by saying that the great spiritual depression is over.(:32)

Whether the depression is over or not remains to be seen, but there are evidences of spiritual concern in North America that are as

real as in other countries that are said to be in revival. Eugene Peterson writing of the situation in North America said:

> There is a ground-swell of recognition spreading through our culture that all life is at root spiritual; that everything we see is formed and sustained by what we cannot see. Those of us who grew up in the Great Spiritual Depression and who accustomed ourselves to an obscure life in the shadow of arrogant Rationalism and bullying Technology can hardly believe our eyes and ears. People all around us--neighbors and strangers, rich and poor, communists and capitalists-want to know God . . . . (1993:27-28)

A further reason why the challenge to mission must be held high is the collapse of ideologies. Most persons, especially those who grew up in the period of the Cold War, could scarcely believe it when the Berlin Wall was torn down. This thesis is informed by the personal experience of standing in Red Square and sharing faith with others in front of Lenin's tomb. The personal impact was enormous, especially after living a whole life fearing the Russian threat and with the knowledge that the Soviet position toward Christianity was one of intolerance. Yet, with the collapse of the Communist state came freedom for mission.

The same collapse is happening in many countries. While the People's Republic of China might be nominally communist, ". . . even privileged Chinese insiders are prepared to admit that Maoism has been hollowed out."(Kew and Okorocha 1996:37) Latin America is seriously experimenting with democracy. The end of civil wars in Portuguese-speaking southern Africa, and the collapse of Apartheid in South Africa are evidences of the collapse of ideologies unfavorable to

prophetic perceptions of the Christian gospel. Americans are waking up to the possibilities that the ideology of the assumed Christian nation they live in is distinctly more secular and that missionaries from Korea and Brazil now view America as a mission field. These realities open wide the door of opportunity for individual involvement in mission by Christians in all the churches.

There are increasing opportunities through communication that make mission more favorable. Technological advances, the Internet, chat rooms on the Web, and visual media are exploding. Kew and Okorocha aver:

> While "talking" through computers may seem horribly impersonal to older generations, people once felt that way about telephones. Yet online conversations could well become the starting point for many as they journey toward faith.(1997:39-40)

Therefore churches and church members should seriously consider having a presence in cyberspace that makes the gospel available to persons who might not ever visit a church. More mega-churches are focusing on seekers with little or no Christian memory and are providing learning opportunities for them to explore the attraction of the gospel. As the information age continues to unfold, the church must take every available opportunity to link to the culture and to answer the questions of those who are seeking spiritual knowledge.

A second implication that comes from New Testament history is that the culture today still fosters opportunities for small groups of Christians gathering together in associations. According to Ralph Neighbor more than 90% of Americans today are members of some kind of

small group.(1997) It may be a golf group, a study group, a professional group, or some special interest group. There are significant opportunities for Christians to organize special interest groups in their homes to examine the issue of spirituality. Persons who are seekers, like the Gentiles who attended the synagogue in the New Testament day, often welcome opportunities for fellowship and spiritual discussion outside the walls of the church.

Christians who wish to be on mission can take the opportunity to include friends and neighbors, co-workers, and newcomers to the community in a small group in their home. Such a setting can allow those seeking to know about Christianity the opportunity to experiment with it in a small and intimate group. These groups offer perhaps the best opportunity to do evangelism in depth within the culture. So much of what is done in the name of evangelism in churches pre-supposes knowledge of Christianity and of Scripture that those who might be reached are frustrated with unanswered questions that the church is not prepared or equipped by way of its liturgy or programs to answer. Small groups or associations can offer opportunities to explore the concepts of Christianity in depth in the home of a Christian.

A third implication suggests that churches must become more kingdom focused and not dependent on the corporate business and industrial model that has dominated American Christendom during the last 50 years. The New Testament church recognized that its mission was to reach those in a particular locale and to reach out to whomever

it could regardless of their background. It was constantly seeking to draw into itself those who were seekers in the community. In each city in which Paul established a church there were problems that arose. Corinth is an example. The Corinthian community consisted predominantly of Gentiles. Not many were well-educated as Paul says in 1 Cor 1:26. Evidence also suggests that some had been polytheistic.(1 Cor 8:5) Some of the people had come from backgrounds of immorality. Hinson says "The larger agenda, however, was how the Corinthians should relate to their natural cultural backgrounds now that they were Christians."(1981:53) Addressing such issues as in Corinth was vital to proper contextualization of the gospel and provided the churches help in learning to interface with the general culture that surrounded them.

A church that is not sensitive to the culture around it will not easily become a kingdom church. It is quite easy to develop a corporate model that appeals to one thin strata of the culture. Yet, a kingdom church will grapple with the imperfections of the culture as it seeks to be on mission. It will accept persons where they are and attempt to help them, as Paul did with the Corinthians, live as Christians in their culture.

A fourth implication drawn from the history of the New Testament church has to do with church planting as a need in the culture today. America is no longer the melting pot that it once assumed. It is multi-cultural, multi-linguistic, multi-racial, and more fragmented culturally than ever. While it is assumed that there are plenty of

churches in America to fill the spiritual needs of the nation, all of them added together would not be able to contain the population of this nation on any given Sunday should every person in America desire to attend at once. Further, most of the churches are locked in a cultural vacuum that does not reflect the multi-variant nature of the larger community. There are few churches, for example, that are open to motorcycle clubs. These persons represent a culture vastly different from the churched culture. Their language, their lifestyle, and their mode of dress is abhorrent to most churched people. Yet, John Smith, a Methodist friend, has been called by one of the larger clubs in Atlanta as their pastor. They worship in an open area on a mountain. As one of the members of the club expressed it, "I work construction, and I helped build some of those buildings in Atlanta with the points on top, but I would not set foot in the damned place." While this may seem an extreme example, it is indicative of persons in the culture who wish to express their faith, but not in the context of the church as it now exists.

There are just as many persons from other lifestyles who might never be reached by established local churches to demand that communities of faith be established that will reach them. Church planting will need to become more contextualized and driven by needs of indigenous peoples. Church starting must emerge out of the context of the culture. It cannot be the object of the denominational agency's desire to begin a church in an area just because the area seems not to have a church within a few miles and because they have

the budget to begin one. Churches will be needed by the hundreds in many communities just to keep up with the demographic growth realities. Rather than insisting that the denomination be charged with church planting, local churches should take it upon themselves to plant churches in areas of missional outreach. Churches must also be willing to be on mission to segments of the culture without a need to revise the cultural setting to be like the home church. It must be willing to address problems but also to let the church emerge with its own distinct understanding of itself as a Christian community who can also be on mission.

History has much to teach the church today that would be on mission. The evolution of the Christian gospel is not complete; therefore, churches must see themselves as constantly evaluating their role in the Christian mission in terms of the precedent set by the New Testament. When Southern Baptists fully examine the context of the New Testament world in all its diversity and the churches that were established in it, they should be able to move beyond a Christendom mindset that assumes a culture that is open to the gospel as Christians view it and toward the reality of a world that is pluralistic and diverse in its views of spirituality and faith.

Chapter Five

Theological Foundations for Mission and Evangelism

5.1 A Theological Perspective for Evangelism.

John Jonsson has suggested that "Biblical strategies for evangelization must be understood and formulated in terms of, the whole church, with the whole Gospel, for the whole person, in the whole society, for the whole world."(1987:48) Jonsson suggests an approach to the fulfillment of the Great Commission that, although assumed within the mission of Southern Baptists, has not been fully examined or practiced by the majority of Southern Baptist churches as is evidenced by the monolithic approach to evangelism present within the Convention.

Wilbert Shenk helps to focus a solution to the problem by suggesting that mission will need to contain all of the elements of the *missio Dei.* These include: an understanding of Jesus the Messiah as the anointed one in whom God's reign is inaugurated in the world and through whom that reign will be accomplished; the recognition of the Holy Spirit who continues the mission of the Messiah; a recognition of the messianic community as the instrument of the Messiah's mission; and an eschatological framework of mission which keeps present and future together by allowing the power of the eschaton to shape the life of the messianic community.(1993:31) Shenk says "All this is of the essence of evangelical faith, and evangelical faith cannot but be expressed in response to what God has done in Jesus the

Messiah."(ibid.) Shenk's observations have the potential to help Southern Baptists move to a more comprehensive approach to mission and evangelism by including a realistic application of *missio Dei* in an approach to biblical evangelism called for by Jonsson.

Both Jonsson and Shenk suggest in their observations a theological framework that seems to have the potential to provide for Southern Baptists a more wholistic foundation for the practice of mission and evangelism in light of the *missio Dei.* Given the corporate nature of Southern Baptists to invest in agencies to accomplish mission and evangelism for them, the need for reflection on the *missio Dei* and the need to understand a thoroughly Biblical foundation is critical to future efforts of not only individual churches but the Convention as a whole.

The current missiology of Southern Baptists is not wholistic as Jonsson has defined it. Evangelism in Southern Baptist life has no accountability for wholistic involvement. Both mission and evangelism among Southern Baptists has failed to be reflective of Shenk's model for mission because it has not considered theological foundations. As a result the mission of Southern Baptists has failed to be fully contextualized within the cultures that have been targets of missional outreach. The underlying problem that has led to this observation is fully realized in Shenk's observations. In the following pages an attempt will be made to fashion a more contextual theology for missions and evangelism for Southern Baptists using the observations of Jonsson and Shenk.

5.2 The Whole Church.

If a proper biblical strategy involves the whole church as Jonsson has suggested, Southern Baptists must re-think several practical issues that relate to the church. First, Southern Baptists must re-think the implications of missions and evangelism as a task for the whole church. Most of the membership of local churches would agree that each Christian should be on mission and should share his or her faith with the lost. Research among pastors indicates that they have an optimistic opinion of the number of people in their churches who are engaged in evangelistic witness.(Whitten 1991:8-12) Yet, in actual practice baptismal rates within churches suggest less than one percent of church members ever share their faith in the course of a year with an unbeliever.(Jones 1995:5-14) This is due in part to the expectation that the church's programs will accomplish the task of evangelization of the community for the church member.(Whitten 1991:12)

The attitude present in most Southern Baptist churches suggests if the proper programs are offered to the community the lost will come to participate in them and thus be exposed to the gospel. The use of programs continues to be the primary method of outreach for Southern Baptists due in part to the role of the agencies of the Convention, both national and local, which are designed to function as resource developers and as consultants for the expression of the goals of the Convention through its programs. Each year new programs are developed that promise success to the churches who use them.

Southern Baptists seem unaware that this attitude has its locus in the wedding of Christendom and modernity. They seem unaware that their programs (especially the evangelistic programs) are often intrusive to the culture, make assumptions about the culture that are largely unproven, and tend to oppress certain parts of the culture (such as homosexuals who are excluded from membership in many churches) when they do not respond to the programs of the church.

Modernity's influences have penetrated the church to the extent that the programs of outreach focused to the community are culturally specific and make no allowances for the diverse lifestyles within the larger community. Therefore, they fall short of their intended purpose. Thus, the gospel is reduced making it coextensive with the particular program it seeks to promote. Shenk warns "Vigilance must be maintained against the temptation to present any particular program or experience as a full measure of the gospel."(1993:26) Therefore, the programmatic model falls short within the mission of Southern Baptists because it takes away from the individual any serious encounter with the gospel's personal imperative for mission and produces in the church a model which is little more than the effect of Christendom and modernization upon the witness of the churches. Such a model violates Jonsson's call for the whole church's involvement in a biblical strategy.

Shenk affirms this observation about the failure of programs by saying "Every system or artifact human beings devise, regardless of all it promises to contribute to human welfare, is marked by human

fallibility and is subject to manipulation for selfish ends."(:21) This is especially true for most of the programs offered to the culture by Southern Baptists because they are designed to enlarge the local churches through recruitment.

A plethora of programs have been written by Southern Baptists that promise evangelistic growth in the churches as a result of strategies which are based upon recruitment schemes. A large number of entrepreneurs have made huge profits merchandising evangelistic programs to Southern Baptist churches. Programs such as Elmer Town's "Friends Day" have been multiplied throughout the churches. These programs, however, do little to enhance the understanding of the kingdom of God but in reality serve to enhance attendance and membership drives. These programs, therefore, reflect a modern design for Southern Baptists that views expansion tantamount to the accomplishment of mission. They are not reflective of Shenk's observation that the *missio Dei* must seek a recognition of the messianic community as the instrument of the Messiah's mission.(:31)

Part of the problem is in the confusion of the goal of evangelistic witness. Many churches feel that their evangelistic efforts build the kingdom of God. John Driver, writing in *The Transfiguration of Mission* disagrees, however, saying "The church does not build the kingdom. God is the builder and the church is the building."(Shenk 1993:100) A misunderstanding occurs when churches become the center of their own evangelistic concerns and activities: "The attitude of the church becomes marked with triumphalism, and the

church sees itself as an agent of the kingdom and the dispenser of salvation rather than a sign of the kingdom and a witness to God's amazing grace."(:97) When evangelism is seen as expansion or recruitment and not as the gospel of the kingdom, the messianic community fails to become the instrument of the Messiah's mission which included the announcement of the kingdom of God.

If Jesus' mission was concerned with the Kingdom of God, as John Driver suggests, Southern Baptists must develop their outreach efforts not based upon recruitment goals and not based entirely in programs but in a willingness for each disciple (personal responsibility) to become an instrument of witness of the Messiah, yet working together (church on mission) as community, for witness to the world. Driver sums up the task saying "Just as Jesus in his person as well as by his preaching, teaching, and activity communicated the good news of the establishment of God's reign, he also commissioned the messianic community to continue the same kind of witness."(:100) This will mean that the church has to understand its role in instrumental terms rather than as managers of programs designed to simply bring others to church membership. To accomplish this task, Southern Baptists will have to take seriously the issue of personal accountability for evangelism based upon kingdom vision, upon discipleship that seeks to join in Christ's mission, and immersion in a community of faith that is the reflection of the kingdom of God on earth.

Christians must take seriously the concept of the whole church working together as community to accomplish the Messiah's mission.

Most church members, however, default the task of evangelism to a small number of church members who seem to exhibit a concern for or gift in evangelism or to the pastoral leadership of the church. This deference to leaders to complete the task of evangelism largely occurs because the average member views the task of evangelism as too difficult or complex. Church members are often given complex models for evangelistic witness that require memorization or the use of complex tools as a means to prooftext their witness such as in the Southern Baptist evangelism program, "Continuing Witness Training." This process, however, leads to discouragement and feelings of inadequacy for the task since most members are not capable of using such tools.

This problem is further exacerbated when pastors exercise exclusive rites over baptism of the converted. Laypersons are not generally encouraged or allowed to baptize those who come to faith as a result of their personal witness. The pastor who baptizes all converts subtly communicates to the church that he alone is responsible for the new convert's faith. Most laypersons therefore assume they cannot baptize anyone or that they do not have the right to do so. Once baptized, it is the pastor who usually teaches the new members classes if they are taught at all. Typically, most converts are invited to join the Sunday School in order to further their discipleship where assumptions are made that the goal will be met. However, high drop-out rates among Southern Baptists undergird the observation that most often the goal of discipleship development is not met through the typical

Sunday School. Research conducted by Kirk Hadaway and Penny Marler illustrated the problem of drop-out rates:

> Within the general population about 42% remain in one faith tradition or another. These people will often switch church or denomination but tend to stay involved. They are referred to as "loyalists."
>
> Another category known as "dropouts" quit attending church after a period of two years or more of inactivity. Fifty-eight percent of the dropouts who were once involved in a local church will occasionally return but tend to drop out again.
>
> However, 36% of the dropouts quit attending altogether. These are people who eventually drift away never to be reached by the church again.(1996)

A more serious implication is that evangelism can only be done by those in the church who are spiritual leaders or officials in the church. David Bosch cites Feitse Boerwinkel saying that the institutionalization of church offices is one of the characteristics of the Constantinian dispensation.(1991:467) The typical Southern Baptist church structure carries with it the implication that spiritual persons teach Sunday School classes, serve as deacons, and hold other leadership positions. The average church member is constantly exposed to a spiritual hierarchy that suggests the average member is not yet equipped or authorized to share his or her faith until they become leaders. This problem is especially serious considering the role of women in most Southern Baptist churches.

The official stance of the Southern Baptist Convention declares women cannot be pastors of SBC churches. This position carried to its logical conclusion suggests that women should not seek to fulfill the

call of God upon their lives, if their call should be that of the pastorate. In most Southern Baptist churches women cannot serve as deacons or hold any ordained office in the church. A few staunchly conservative churches even go so far as to prohibit women from exercising any leadership over men and some will not permit women to pray in public. This problem is being undergirded in the mainline Southern Baptist seminaries where curriculum and official policy places women in a subservient role to men in the practice of ministry.

The *Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Catalogue, 1998-2000,* carries the following notation in its Master of Divinity Degree curriculum requirements: "Pursuant to the Purpose Statement clause which espouses a male pastorate, women M.Div. Students will take Biblical Teaching Lab in place of Expository Preaching and Principles of Leadership in place of Pastoral Leadership."(1998-2000:48) The seminary purpose statement maintains "consistent with Convention resolution and agency policy, that, while a wonderful range of strategic and effectual ministry is open to both men and women, the pastor of a biblical congregation must be male."(:5) While there are many Southern Baptist churches that are increasingly opening the doors of ministry to women, out of 3,400 Southern Baptist churches in Georgia, there are presently only three women serving as pastors of small Southern Baptist churches. These women are not recognized in the official listing of pastors and their churches in the *Georgia Baptist Annual.*(1997)

The message that is communicated to women regarding ordained positions is filtered downward in most churches suggesting that women should involve themselves in supportive tasks within the churches rather than in leadership tasks. Many are reluctant to exercise leadership especially in areas of evangelism. However, they are often the ones responsible in the churches to emphasize the mission offerings and benevolence ministries of the church.

Helping Southern Baptists to understand that the whole church consists of men, women, ordained, laity, average members and leaders, all of whom are responsible for missions and evangelism, remains a large obstacle to the work of the churches. The challenge must be met. Jonsson clarifies the reason saying "Our strategies for evangelization must give recognition to the Word of God within the human predicament of lostness if there is to be substance to the meaning and purpose of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."(1987:55) Yet, the messianic community can never fully recognize its potential as instruments of the Messiah's mission without a radical re-commitment to the whole church as demonstrated in the New Testament, working together to accomplish Christ's mission on the earth.

5.3 The Whole Gospel.

Jonsson suggests that a proper biblical evangelism considers the whole gospel. John Driver has suggested that the Great Commission has traditionally served as a "rallying cry for mobilizing the church in its evangelizing mission."(1993:199) This has especially been the case

for Southern Baptists. The Great Commission text is frequently used by the publishing agencies of the SBC to undergird the mission study materials which are sent to churches. Much of the membership in Southern Baptist churches is therefore influenced to define the gospel almost exclusively in terms of the Great Commission. It is a narrowed view since to be an evangelistic church in Southern Baptist life is to be a church that concentrates its energy on fulfilling the evangelistic mandate of the Commission often with little regard to teaching, or discipleship. Most church members do not feel the gospel has been preached unless it is preached with high evangelistic rhetoric. Yet, in most churches in the SBC the evangelistic sermons preached in revivals or in Sunday services fall on the ears of persons who have already claimed Christianity as their faith.(Jones 1993:28-29) Many churches looking for pastors will insist they want a pastor who can appeal to the lost in his preaching. Seldom are the themes of ministry and mission woven into the fabric of evangelistic preaching. Rather, among many Southern Baptist pastors, evangelistic preaching is entirely focused on the apocalyptic; heaven to gain and hell to shun. Mission, in the minds of many, is simply a vehicle for evangelism. For others, ministry functions as a way to legitimize an evangelistic witness. Charles Roesel and Donald Atkinson aver "The intent of ministry evangelism is to present the good news of God's love in order to introduce persons to Jesus."(1995:10) There is little regard for the application of the gospel message to human experience in daily life outside of an evangelistic appeal.

The whole gospel, however, will concentrate on the entirety of the human situation. It will cause Christians in the churches to concern themselves with the liberation of people from human suffering and injustice with the same fervor they hold for the salvation of persons from sin. It will not oscillate between the two. The whole gospel will be as concerned to right the wrongs of the society as much as it is concerned with righting a person's life from sin. "The 'spiritual Gospel' and the 'material Gospel' were in Jesus one Gospel."(Bosch 1991:408) As Visser 't Hooft has said:

> A Christianity which has lost its vertical dimension has lost its salt and is not only insipid in itself, but useless to the world. But a Christianity which would use the vertical preoccupation as a means to escape from its responsibility for and in the common life of man is a denial of the incarnation.(1968:318)

A whole gospel will not allow a privatization of faith but rather will insist that faith be exercised within the culture so that all things might be reconciled to God. As Driver has indicated "Therefore, in light of the scope of God's salvific intention, no aspect of life within the created order lies outside our evangelizing concern."(1993:200) The whole gospel needs to be embraced within Southern Baptist life in order to keep the churches from tunnel vision that focuses on the afterlife with little thought for the world for which Christ died. A whole gospel will be grounded in the Bible and consist in giving an account of the reasons that make mission both possible and necessary.

The whole gospel is reflected in Shenk's observation that an effective understanding of *missio Dei* views Jesus the Messiah as the anointed one in whom God's reign is inaugurated in the world and through whom that reign will be accomplished.(1993:31) Evangelistic programs, activities, fervor, and evangelistic preaching are simply the beginning of the story. Much more is needed to accomplish the proclamation of the whole gospel such as: advocacy for the poor within the community, advocacy for civil rights, concern for the injustices of laws that discriminate, and any other actions that have the potential to redeem society. Evangelism and socio-political action as Bosch has suggested are both "part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrine of God and man, our love for our neighbor and our obedience to Jesus Christ."(Bosch 1991:405)

If the whole gospel has as its intention the primacy of Jesus the Messiah as the anointed one in whom God's reign is inaugurated in the world, it is critical for Southern Baptists to embrace elements necessary in accomplishing that task. However, the task before Southern Baptists will not be done by simply increasing the level of evangelistic rhetoric. Southern Baptists must fully recognize what the whole gospel is saying about Jesus as Messiah. A part of the task will then be to communicate the fullness of Jesus' life and incarnation to the culture.

The whole gospel must reflect the entire work of Jesus the Messiah as it is lived out within the culture. It will be "missiology enroute" (Shenk 1993:32) and will reflect the dynamic of the Messiah's life on

mission to the world. Southern Baptists face the danger of reducing Jesus' life to His birth, astounding miracles, a few hours on the cross, and the empty tomb. The whole gospel must tell the whole story: the story of the suffering servant (Isaiah 53) who identifies with those suffering in the community, the friend of the poor (Luke 4:18; 14:21) who understands what it is means to be poor, the one who liberates (Luke 6:22) those who are oppressed within the culture, the prophetic voice (Luke 7:24-28) who warns the community, the healer (Matthew 9) who heals those who are sick within the community, and the Saviour (John 4:42) who redeems the community, as well as the familiar elements mentioned above. Each component of the Messiah's life and mission suggests to Christians a lifestyle that must be mirrored through action within the culture as Christians live their daily lives.

5.4 The Whole Person.

Embracing the concept of the whole person as Jonsson suggests is vital to a biblical understanding of evangelism. Southern Baptists must take seriously the psychological, sociological, physical, and emotional realities that control human beings. More will need to be done to help persons with pastoral care issues and with life need issues. Churches who narrow their focus exclusively to the souls of persons will have little success in reaching a culture that already recognizes the fuller aspects of the human situation and that expects to address the human condition in terms of wholism.

Shenk suggests that the *missio Dei* is fully conscious of the whole person. It is through persons that the Holy Spirit works in the world. Whole persons are essential if they are to have the potential of new life and of being on mission with the Messiah. Therefore the concept of biblical strategies for evangelism being focused upon the whole person makes it possible for the Holy Spirit to continue the mission of the Messiah through persons who have been rescued. As Jesus rescued persons in His day, from physical, emotional, and spiritual ills the church must help to rescue people and help them come to wholeness in new life with Christ. It is then that rescued people become more aware of the psychological dynamics of personality, are concerned for the emotional issues people face, and are keenly conscious of ministry needs within the lives of persons who have yet to meet the Saviour.

David Bosch writing in *Missionalia* has suggested that Jesus' mission, according to Luke ". . . consisted of three thrusts: empowering the weak and the lowly, healing the sick, and saving the lost."(1989:3-21) This ministry triad is critical to an evangelism that focuses upon the wholeness of persons. It will call for Christians to take seriously the ministry issues that Jesus identified as necessary to the complete healing of persons from suffering and sin. Jesus' emphasis on identification with outcasts, the poor and lowly, with sinners, and with other marginalized people witness ". . . Jesus' practice of boundary-breaking compassion, which the church is called to emulate."(Bosch 1991:86)

Churches that focus on the whole person through ministry-based evangelism (an evangelism that considers the whole person and ministers to that person accordingly) seem to have more success in reaching unchurched and lost persons with the Gospel. Pastor Charles Roesel has led First Baptist Church of Leesburg, Florida in mission to the whole person. The members of First Baptist participate in 60 outreach ministries to their community that have resulted in over 300 conversions of lost persons each year for the last decade. The ministries focus on helping persons to become whole through the alleviation of problems such as abuse in their lives, the need for employment, help with medical issues, emotional trauma, and spiritual needs to name only a few. Roesel says:

> Our church realizes that persons can not be reached with the gospel until we are willing to help them with the problems they face in their lives. We are concerned that whatever obstacle they face that keeps them from being able to relate to God is removed. When they are freed from the trauma of their needs, they are more fully able to hear the voice of God in their lives.(1998)

Another component within a biblical strategy to the whole person can be seen in the effect upon Christians who take seriously ministry to others. As Roesel has suggested:

> The members of our church have a new understanding of how the Holy Spirit works when they minister to others. They see the world differently. These church members are more concerned with people than they are with going through the motions of religion.(1998)

Henry Blackaby has said that Christians must learn to ask "God, show me today where you are working, and let me join you there."(1997) When

Christians recognize that the Holy Spirit is continuing the mission of the Messiah, they will learn the importance of asking Blackaby's question. The focus of ministry will take on new importance as Christians understand that the Messiah continues to be concerned for the wholeness of persons and that the task of Christians is to be led of the Spirit to embrace a similar concern.

5.5 The Whole Society.

If biblical evangelism is to take into account the whole society Southern Baptist churches will have to boldly encounter the evils of individual and structural racism, of economic injustice, of social justice, and similar issues that plague the culture. They will not be able to select politically correct encounters or those that promise no adverse effects as a result of the church's input to the issue at hand. While Southern Baptists have made advances with regard to structural racism, for example, its churches remain for the most part white. Much of the church relocation that is occurring today is based upon a desire to escape the problems of transitional communities. Rarely does a Southern Baptist church in a transitional community decide to integrate to the extent that it looks like the culture that surrounds it. Georgia Baptist executive Shuford Jones says "Most often it will either die or re-locate with hopes of finding persons more like the church culture than the transitional community".(1998)

The problem is also seen in the agencies of Southern Baptist life that are almost totally white and male dominated. These agencies do not

reflect the larger culture nor the culture within the churches themselves. Alternate lifestyles are especially problematic. For example, the official stance of Southern Baptist agency leaders recorded in the *Southern Baptist Convention Book of Reports, 1998* is to turn their backs on the gay and lesbian communities and to call for churches to boycott businesses that are sympathetic with the gay lifestyle.(1998:126-127) Leadership within one state Convention has initiated a committee to study those churches that minister to gay communities and to remove them from the fellowship of the larger Convention.(Georgia Baptist Executive Committee Action, September, 1998) The insistence is that the homosexual community should first change their lifestyle, repent of their actions, and then they can be considered by the church. Southern Baptists have little hope of reaching diverse persons in the culture, such as homosexuals, as long as they maintain a comfortable distance between the church and diverse persons and as long as they issue ultimata in condemnation of such groups. Shenk's understanding of *missio Dei* connects to Jonsson's call for an evangelization formulated in the whole society by recognizing the work of the whole church as a messianic community functioning as the instrument of the Messiah's mission.

The messianic community will find ways to converse with every sector of the larger culture and will not be offended by the diverse lifestyles it finds any more than Jesus was offended by sinners and publicans. If the Messiah's mission is to bring the Kingdom of God to

all people, the whole church must be on mission to every element of the whole society for such a purpose.

The whole church working together should affirm persons who have been redeemed from the darker fringes of the culture and encourage them for mission to the hard places of life. These people, instead of being pressured to conform to the mainstream of normative church life, should use their experiences as creative points of entry to the culture from which they came. Former drug addicts, for example, are better equipped to penetrate the drug culture with the gospel than a person who has lived her entire life within the shelter of the church culture and who knows none of the language of the street. Successful business persons should be sent on mission by the church to the wealthy. Penetrating the whole society with the gospel will require the church to encourage each person to be on mission and to utilize their experiences and their strengths for ministry within the culture.

5.6 The Whole World.

Finally, Jonsson insists that the whole world must be considered if biblical evangelism can take place. Reaching the world for Jesus Christ will demand that Southern Baptists consider the implications of such a task. The optimism of Baptists has historically led them to establish goals for reaching the world that have always remained unmet. One reason for their failure has been the lack of understanding of the implications of such a goal. Most Southern Baptist churches have failed to reach their own communities, yet they remain optimistic that

their programs will be effective in reaching the world. Another problem has been in the narrowness of focus to accomplish the goal. A third problem is the unwillingness to escape the Christendom model that plagues Southern Baptists and their mission endeavors.

Southern Baptists must learn how to cooperate with other believers from other Christian traditions in the accomplishment of mission. Furthermore, Southern Baptists must learn to engage in dialogue with world religions in order to understand more fully the perspective of persons who are not Christian. Without an understanding of the cultures of the world and an appreciation of them, Christianity will continue to be seen by other cultures as only another Western export on the part of religious zealots. Southern Baptists will need to take seriously the challenge of seeing the world through other's eyes and will need to commit to mission from the comprehensive position of the *missio Dei*.

Shenk's observation in keeping with the *missio Dei* to the whole world suggests "an eschatological framework of mission which keeps present and future together by allowing the power of the eschaton to shape the life of the messianic community."(1993:31) This eschatological framework is critical to Southern Baptists if they are to be energized to carry the gospel to the whole world, not in their usual rhetoric, but in reality.

Southern Baptists should keep in mind that the arbitrary setting of Bold Mission Thrust goals, "to carry the gospel to the world by the year 2000," cannot possibly be attained without an understanding of the

promise that is being fulfilled. When Jesus came to the end of His earthly ministry, He passed on the responsibility to His disciples to continue the still-incomplete mission. While Jesus speaks of this mission of proclaiming the reign of God throughout the world as being directly linked to the end of all things, He re-assured His disciples that He would return again to claim His victory and to be with them. (Shenk 1996:92)

Such a promise suggests that Southern Baptists should approach the world with what Shenk has called an "already/not yet" confidence.(:92) Christians should celebrate the reign of God that has become present in Jesus Christ and yet understand the reality of the powers of darkness that have yet to be overcome. Shenk says "The New Testament is pervaded by this eschatological tension, a tension linked to messianic mission with its notes of judgement, urgency, hope, deliverance, and salvation."(ibid.) The celebration should give strength to continue while facing the powers of darkness with soberness.

Mission to the whole world will require the balance of hope and expectation and of celebration of the reign of God against the backdrop of the need to confront the powers of darkness. If the two are not in balance, mission will suffer. Hope, expectation, and celebration functioning alone have the potential of causing the church to feel that it has been salvaged from evil and thus it will be tempted to focus its energies entirely upon the "already" of the kingdom. An exclusive focus on the evils of the world will cause the church to be defeated as the powers of darkness seem to multiply around it. Both will cause the

church to stagnate in its mission. Both positions must be kept in balance to avoid stagnation. Shenk has suggested that the Messiah's mission as presented in the New Testament is bound up with the missionary mandate Jesus gave to His disciples and that the promise of the eschaton is correlated with mission. Therefore, Southern Baptists must understand that mission takes its orientation from the reign of God toward which it is moving.

Such an understanding will help Southern Baptists to have patience to work with other Christian traditions that are moving in the same direction and to view the progress toward the goal as a common Christian endeavor. Narrow provincialism cannot be allowed to segment the movement toward the eschaton.

A further conclusion is that Southern Baptists will of necessity have to become more understanding of persons from differing world religions. Southern Baptists have been exclusivistic in their assertion that Christianity is the only true religion. While many Southern Baptists would agree to a general revelation of God for all religions, they focus more narrowly when it comes to the issue of salvation being only in Christ. Such a focus places Southern Baptists outside the realm of significant dialogue with other religions about the revelation of God. Southern Baptists' concern for other religions is that they acknowledge Jesus Christ as Saviour. When persons from other world religions do not adhere to the confession of Jesus as Saviour, the exclusivism of Southern Baptists' theological position leaves few possibilities for further dialogue. John Jonsson has urged

liberation from creedalized Christologies. Jonsson insists that we must ". . . put our faith alongside other faiths, using all the human values we have in common to interact with the other faiths."(1998:22) He continues by quoting M. M. Thomas, saying that it is in this process of evaluation that we are to reaffirm "our confession of the ultimacy of Christ as the judge and redeemer of human rationality, community, and other penultimate values--as well as the religiosity of humankind."(ibid.) Jonsson's view of incarnation mission focuses on the mystery that God became a human being.(1 Timothy 3:16) Jonsson warns that creedal positions encapsulate Christ within the church and keep us from "rediscovering who he is, the Galilean Jesus; the God-person Christ within the world."(1998:24) Jonsson urges that Christology be repositioned within the human context. The humanization of theology becomes critical to the church's mission in Jonsson's formulation. In this way, persons are freed from cultural, religious, political, economic, and racial divisions that dispossess them from God.(1998:29)

Southern Baptists need to examine Jonsson's view of incarnational mission. In doing so, they would be provided with an opportunity truly to understand the importance of proper contextualization of mission within world religions. Southern Baptists would be better equipped to see their missiological task as witness that continues the messianic mission of Jesus wherever people are in society. Jonsson says that Christians and churches will need to be retranspositionalized in terms of the world. Incarnational mission will affirm Jesus' mission to the

broken, to those who have never heard the gospel, to those who are rich, to those who are politically oppressed, to those seeking meaning in life, and to all people everywhere who struggle for meaning in life. Such a position will bring everyone to the banquet table where the incarnate Christ can reveal God's reign and himself as the "word made flesh."(John 1-14)

Jesus spoke of the consummation of the reign of God in terms of a great messianic banquet. This was an event which Jewish people believed would inaugurate the Messiah's reign. Shenk says "The metaphor of the messianic banquet is rich in meaning: a time when God's people would enjoy shalom through the direct mediation of the Messiah."(1996:92)

However, Jesus reinterprets the banquet imagery by speaking in universal terms about the inclusion of the Gentiles at the banquet table. Southern Baptists must understand that carrying the gospel to the world will require sitting at banquet with "Gentiles," persons from every religious tradition. Such inclusion will prevent the Christendom model of mission from being engaged and will give opportunity for shared humanity across barriers that will offer the potential for the gospel to be heard more fully and for Christians to experience the humanity of others. Both Matthew 8:11ff and Luke 13:28f suggest that the "guests" at the feast will be those who confess their dependence on God while "workers of iniquity" will be excluded. Southern Baptists must not be hesitant to depend upon God for guidance as they sit at table with the nations. They must also be willing to let God decide who

are the "workers of iniquity," while they understand their task as being on incarnational mission bearing witness to what they have "seen and heard of the Lord." (Acts 4:20)

The tension between the already and the not/yet should cause Christians to move into the whole world with confidence. In the interim the eschaton infuses the messianic community with hope and power as it continues to witness amid opposition and suffering.(Shenk 1996:93) But it is the interaction of these elements that represents the mission dynamic and as Shenk says ". . . defines the vocation of the disciples of Jesus Christ in the world."(ibid.)

Chapter Six

Mission and Evangelism in a Changing World

6.1 Factors Contributing to a Changing World.

According to Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, "Sometime between 1960 and 1980, an old, inadequately conceived world ended, and a fresh, new world began."(1989:15) Hauerwas and Willimon begin their book, *Resident Aliens*, by challenging Christians to face the changing world and by assessing the culture that has dramatically changed since World War II. This chapter argues that Southern Baptists, having been caught in changes which Hauerwas and Willimon describe, must consider carefully the impact of these changes in light of effective mission and the evangelization of the culture.

Each element of change will need to be explored to grasp the implications of change that is needed. Because of the complexities of modern life no single change will be enough. Religious orientation, for example, is often a reflection of a particular lifestyle that a person chooses. Demographic shifts impact lifestyles. Culture often shifts as a result of the combination of these and other factors. While not exhaustive, the elements of cultural change, lifestyle patterns, general religious orientation preferences, and demographic realities contribute to the challenge ahead for Southern Baptists as they move to the 21st century.

An honest assessment of these elements will give Southern Baptists a creative opportunity to re-tool for the future without the temptation

to merely repeat a dependency on past patterns. If the mission of Southern Baptists is to reach the world for Christ they will need to critically evaluate their response to each element that contributes to the changes within the patterns of human life.

6.2 Impact of Culture.

People learn culture. It is not genetically encoded. As such, culture, as a body of learned behaviours common to a given human society, functions much like a template shaping behaviour and consciousness within a human society from generation to generation.(http//www.wsu.edu) Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn define culture as:

> . . . consisting of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action. (1952:357)

Anthropologist Charles Kraft says that human beings are inextricably immersed in culture and that they are born into a particular socio-cultural context.(1981:46) According to Kraft it is essential for the missiologist to study culture in order to understand its effect upon ourselves, to understand the effect of culture upon those we are seeking to reach with the gospel, and to discover how God in his interactions with human beings relates to cultures in which they

are immersed.(ibid.) Although definitions of culture are complex, three characteristics emerge that help to focus the meaning.

First, culture is a dynamic force. Like human beings, culture grows by adapting certain structures and discarding others. Contemporary culture is being shaken, for example, by technical modernity and is adapting to technological trends. While adapting to technology, certain manifestations of old technology are being discarded by the culture. Very few people, for example, insist on manual typewriters in today's culture but they will insist on the latest word processors to facilitate their work. While technology impacts the culture ". . . its essential components will certainly always be related to art, ethics, and religion."(Geffre 1995:18) Art, ethics, and religion, like technology, do not escape the dynamic forces that call for adaptation of the new and the discarding of the old. Often, it is a painful process as some people feel left behind while others seem to advance.

Second, culture is inevitably connected to history. The history is rooted in a certain tradition of the past that informs both consciously and unconsciously. History is important to a culture because it provides a heritage that is transmitted and that further defines the culture. Culture is an invisible but very tight link that binds human beings to their predecessors, contemporaries, and successors.(ibid.) The narrative of history shapes the norms of the culture and further defines it. The sub-sets of a larger culture who remember the stories of the past are likely to remain more homogenous into the future compared to those who forget their past. Therefore,

the importance of the function of narrative and storytelling can be seen in the definition of a culture.(:19)

A third characteristic formulating a definition of culture relates to ethics as a process that has the ability to humanize human beings. In many ways culture is what makes human beings human.(ibid.) Any culture that claims to be humanistic carries with it an ethical imperative. However, the struggle to define humanistic causes tends to also carry with it ethical dimensions that have the potential to unite or divide groups of people who hold to ethical categories emerging out of their definitions of humanity. The lesson of World War II is informative of this potential. For the Nazis of Germany the definition of humanity centered around their ideal of the super race and carried an ethical framework that could exterminate those deemed as inferior. For the Jews, whose definition of humanity was formed in the crucible of oppression throughout their history, an entirely different ethical framework existed that contributed, in part, to millions being led to their deaths without struggle much as their forefathers were led to slavery in the brick ponds of the Egyptians. While at times problematic, ethics communicates the values that shape the culture throughout the generations. Cultures, regardless of how self-serving they might be, tend to view their ethical frameworks as having value that contributes toward a greater human potential and social good.

While these three characteristics contribute toward a definition of culture it is also necessary to view the impact of religion upon cultural development. It is evident that Western culture tends to think of itself as Christian, while, for example, India views its

culture as Hindu, and Middle Eastern countries define their culture as Muslim.

Geffre says "Culture tends to be of greater importance in modern societies. Culture signifies a certain system of values and elements that induce *modes of life.*"(:17) These modes of life are communicated in schools to the larger populace and within the churches to the Christian community. What results are commonly held world-views on the larger scale, such as the notion of America as a free and democratic nation; regional world-views, such as the notion that the West is populated by rugged individualists; and local world-views, found in towns, villages, and communities where founding families, regional themes, historical landscape or traditions determine uniqueness. The culture of a nation, therefore, reflects a patchwork that gives color and character to the whole.

Southern Baptists represent one of the blocks within a patchwork of the religious ethos of the nation, yet the block that represents Southern Baptists also duplicates its color scheme throughout other blocks within the patchwork. There is little doubt that Southern Baptists, with an aggressive evangelism, have worked hard to weave their colors into the fabric of every other block in the whole. But instead of blending into the whole, more often than not, Southern Baptists have stood out as a distinct sub-culture from almost every block in which they have sought to be included. Tony Campolo, recognizing the problem, urged Southern Baptists in the *Alabama Baptist* to become more a part of the culture. Campolo says "Until Southern

Baptists come to grips with this and use it in their ideology, they'll find they are going to be left behind in 25 years."(1998:8)

The dramatic shifts in the American culture are not unlike the shifts in cultures worldwide. However, since World War II American culture has witnessed economic, technological, demographic, and lifestyle shifts that have been profound. Lyle Schaller has called it, "A Different World."(1987:9-20) The shifts within the culture have had dramatic impact upon Southern Baptist churches. The World War II generation witnessed, after the war, a sharp rise in the bell curve of growth and influence of the Convention within Southern culture, but that generation has lived long enough to also witness the other side of the curve which peaked in the 1950s, plateaued in the 1960's, and began its decline in the 1970s.

Fletcher says "As Baptists grew in the South they became increasingly identified with their culture."(1994:2) As long as both the South and Southern Baptists mirrored each other, growth was natural. But today the New South is more diverse and less regional, especially in the large cities, than in the developmental years of the Convention. The influx of large numbers of persons from across the country and through immigration has modified the character of the large cities in the South away from a distinct regionalism. Changes in family structure, politics, economics, and technology combine to focus the contrast of Southern Baptists to the changing culture of the New South.

Southern Baptists must become pro-active in the midst of cultural change. They must recognize the coming together of peoples from all

parts of the world and the cultural pluralism that results. Shenk warns "To take culture seriously for the sake of the Gospel will demand a depth of cultural sensitivity not required in Christendom."(1991:108) Noting the characteristics of cultural change Southern Baptists could respond accordingly.

First, they must embrace the dynamics of culture with a willingness to receive new forms and to discard outdated forms. Most Southern Baptist churches, for example, insist on worship forms that have changed little since the Convention was founded. Music has not changed in Southern Baptist churches to any significant degree. Church members know the old hymns and are reluctant to incorporate hymns that are not familiar.

Recent worship wars have centered around the tension between those who prefer the old hymns, those who prefer contemporary choruses, and those who prefer to write their own songs of worship.(Dawn 1995:166-170) The culture has moved away from pipe organs and pianos to synthesizers, drums, and stringed instruments. Many seminaries now find it difficult to offer traditional organ curriculum because of lack of demand by the students and churches who call music ministers.

In evangelism, most Southern Baptist churches still insist on revivals as a means of evangelistic outreach, but these revivals are largely ineffective in today's culture.(Johnson 1998:83-104) Instead of being effective outreach revivals have become little more than worship services for older church members.

Clearly, a refusal to accept the dynamics of change in the culture like worship patterns and evangelistic outreach of the church is

problematic for Southern Baptists. To continue to insist on forms that have been largely discarded by the unchurched culture will simply ensure that Southern Baptists will increasingly find themselves in a difficult position as they try to fulfill what they believe to be their missiological mandate.

Southern Baptists need not fear the changes of the culture, however, as Emilio Castro has suggested. Because cultures are not neutral, even today's sub-cultures that might not claim a particular religious tradition, tend to idolize specific values.(1995:365) These values present opportunities to the evangelist who learns to encounter the culture through dialogical and constructive ways. Southern Baptists must not fear dialogue but rather see the potential that it affords.

Paul Russ Satari encourages the potential for dialogue in his observations:

> Since no culture is essentially foreign to God, it becomes imperative for Christian mission through the translatability of Christianity to realize the bridge of mutual interaction between the gospel and culture. It is this enduring dialogue between the gospel and culture that has the capacity to link the relationship of the source of life and truth with all human cultures, thus leading to a contextual understanding and experience of faith in God.(Hunsberger 1996:273)

But dialogue must be done honestly and must be done with a response to the culture not as targets of zeal, but with a desire to understand and to learn. It is necessary to approach persons in the larger culture, as Castro says, with an attitude of respect:

> We cannot approach people inside different cultures with a 'hunting attitude,' as it were, of looking for people to get them out of their realities or sub-cultures, and to incorporate them into our own sub-cultures, that we sometimes call the church. Rather, in evangelism, we are going to the encounter of a spiritual construction, where we will expect the signs of the Spirit of God to be at work, and fruits that will enrich the common heritage of humanity. Without a sense of respect and admiration for what we could find in the situation of the others, it would be very difficult to avow it a judgmental attitude that would falsify our evangelistic encounter.(Castro 1995:367)

Old patterns of evangelism, especially in the South, may have been effective in a culture that did not mind the "hunters." But today's culture, increasingly bombarded by sales campaigns, has rejected the hunters. This shift in culture should be noted by Southern Baptists and contribute to inform the denomination that their evangelism programs need to be re-evaluated in light of the changed culture and respect for those who live within each cultural setting.

Southern Baptists must respond to the second characteristic of culture: its connection to history. Rather than treating unchurched people as all the same, Southern Baptists need to be students of the history of peoples and their cultures.

The agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention have spent very little time or effort in trying to understand the history of groups of people that it has sought to evangelize. This is especially true with regard to language groups. For 13 years, the writer was involved in the work of the Home Mission Board and in charge of evangelistic publications. In spite of numerous requests by the writer for approval to publish materials that were historically sensitive to the context of people groups, all materials were simply translated into other

languages with no thought given to what certain words might mean in the history of the people.

Southern Baptists must put forth the effort to actively embrace the history of countries to which their foreign mission extends and to the various cultural groups within the nation to whom they seek to minister. David Bosch reminds that "History is not only the 'context' of mission, but its 'text.'(Bosch 1991:507) The reading of the "text" enables the Christian witness to rightly communicate the gospel within the text of the culture and to dialogue with the cultural text to the extent that the gospel can be understood.

Craig Van Gelder points out that the reason why so many fail to understand history as vital to the construct of cultures is because radicalized modernity has distorted time. Time and history seem to have collapsed, in his view, and this new reality has forced people to experience time and history in a new way based upon the constant process of change.(Hunsberger 1996:32) Thus, the historical context is rarely considered. It will, therefore, be necessary to be more deliberate in constructing communities of faith with a historical consciousness. Missions and evangelism will out of necessity build into its very character an understanding of persons within the culture who are ". . . part of an ongoing history being shaped by the God who was, who is, and who will be forever."(:34)

Southern Baptists will continue to be at a loss in understanding the shifts of culture unless they make the effort to understand their own history as a cultural sub-set and to invest in the cultural sub-sets of others to whom they seek to minister. Having done so, they

will be better able to contextualize the gospel within the culture and will not be accused of merely trying to indoctrinate those they seek to reach with the gospel.

The third aspect of the characteristics of culture must be taken very seriously by Southern Baptists. The ethical dimension cannot be escaped as Christians seek to evangelize the culture. Churches that have not settled the ethical dilemmas within their own congregations have little hope of reaching a world for Christ. President Jimmy Carter recently said to a group of seminary students that he had a difficult time going into other countries talking about reconciliation and peace in countries embroiled in civil war when his own religious denomination had failed to reconcile its divisions. Carter spoke to the pain he felt over the racism, theological conflict, and division evident to even casual observers of the Convention during the last 25 years.(1997)

Carter's dilemma in trying to explain the ethical inconsistencies within his denomination merely points to the surface of the problem. The problem is deeper for many Southern Baptist churches. The problem is directly related to an improper ethical response to the culture. Rather than functioning in an arena of peacemaking, reconciliation, social justice, or racial equality, most church members are concerned to align the culture to their way of thinking and to their behaviour.

George Hunter, III has identified the evangelical goals of people in traditional churches such as Southern Baptists. He says that we want to make the culture religious, believe like us, behave like us, have an experience like us, become like us, be good citizens like us,

share our politics, support the church like us, worship like us, and prepare for heaven.(1996:37-40) Such expectations point to an inadequate understanding of the purpose of the church in the world.

David Bosch addresses the issue of ethics and apocalyptic in an instructive way for Southern Baptists. Given that Southern Baptists have demonstrated in their evangelistic materials and programs a monolithic focus that is content to define evangelism as preparing people for heaven, Bosch's comments are especially appropriate.

Bosch asks the question "how does Paul's apocalyptic understanding of mission relate to ethics?"(1991:149) The question can be extended also to ask "how do Southern Baptists' apocalyptic understanding of mission relate to ethics?" The contrast will be helpful.

The dualism between this age and the age to come for Southern Baptists is absolute. This is precisely why so much attention has been given to their evangelistic programs as central to their mission. But the problem among those who hold to such dualism is that "believers are not called to engage in working for peace, justice, and reconciliation among people."(ibid.) For example, it was not until 1995 that the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution apologizing to the African-American community for the convention's historical involvement in support of slavery. While an appropriate response, it took 150 years to address the problem and to debate the issue among the convention's dissenters. Though the resolution passed, it did nothing to demonstrate a pro-active approach to "tear down the walls" within the infrastructure of racism in the churches or in the culture.

Southern Baptists have been socially conservative and as Bosch indicates, apocalyptic enthusiasm goes well with social conservatism. Bosch says "Moreover, apocalyptic enthusiasts usually display a peculiar self-centeredness. They see themselves as a favored elite."(ibid.) A casual observer can easily pick up on such characteristics on a typical Sunday morning. Preaching often betrays the sentiment that Bosch describes. When it comes to evangelism, it usually happens in a condescending manner. Bosch points out that Paul's apocalyptic is different. So should be Southern Baptists'.

The church that Paul addresses is not preoccupied with self-preservation: "It serves the world in the sure hope of the world's transformation at the time of God's final triumph. The small Pauline churches are so many 'pockets' of an alternative lifestyle that penetrates the mores of society around them."(Bosch 1991:150) Their passion for the coming reign of God goes hand in hand with a passion for the world around them. This ethic is precisely what is needed in Southern Baptist life.

Often Southern Baptist churches are afraid of confronting the culture around them. But "authentic apocalyptic hope compels ethical seriousness. It is impossible to believe in God's coming triumph without being agitators for God's kingdom here and now . . . ."(ibid.) A proper ethical response to the culture will ensure that Southern Baptists resist racism, and work for the equality of all people.

But a Convention that has an oppressive policy with regard to women, for example, discounts Paul's ethical approach to the culture around him. Southern Baptists would do well to honestly study Paul's

theology of inclusiveness and apply lessons learned to the issues that currently divide Southern Baptists. As Bosch explains concerning Paul's position of inclusiveness he says:

> Paul's vehement reaction signifies that since Christ has accepted everybody unconditionally, it is preposterous even to contemplate the possibility of Jews and Gentiles acting differently on the "horizontal" plane, that is, not accepting one another unconditionally. There is, indeed, no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female.(:151)

What Southern Baptists communicate to the larger culture is an ethical dilemma. Thus, their voice becomes negated in other matters as well. A proper ethical response would be to recognize that women had a much higher profile in the Pauline communities than they had in contemporary Judaism.(ibid.) Taking a lesson from Scripture, Southern Baptists would work to elevate the place of women within the culture of today instead of treating them in subservient ways.

Bosch continues in his discussion by pointing to the problem of slavery in Paul's culture. Recognizing that Paul alone cannot alter the culture, he writes to Philemon that there is a better way for Christians to behave. Onesimus, the slave of Philemon, is to be treated by Philemon as Paul would be treated. Paul holds Philemon accountable to view Onesimus differently. Christians today must not promote racism or other forms of slavery within the culture by being silent. They must be pro-active and receive all as brothers and sisters within humanity and as potential brothers and sisters in Christ. Such a position will lead the churches to be pockets of an

alternative lifestyle that penetrates the mores of society around them.(:153)

Southern Baptists must recognize the ethical dimensions that are called to be addressed within the culture if they are to penetrate it. Rather than becoming pockets of safety, looking for a home in heaven, they must see themselves as planting the seeds of revolution within the oppressive structures of society.(ibid.) Perhaps then the culture will take seriously the message they espouse. The potential of more than 35,000 Southern Baptist churches who will take seriously a view of themselves as revolutionaries who can transform the culture within the churches and within the communities lends realistic imagination to the goals Southern Baptists set for themselves of reaching the world for Christ and the fulfillment of His commission.

6.3 Demographic and Lifestyle Changes.

Lifestyle changes as cultures change. Since World War II the changes in American lifestyle have been profound. Demographic changes have occurred as people have moved from the countryside to the cities, as they have become more affluent, diverse, and as they have moved from community webs to isolation from neighbors. The erosion of regionalism, especially in the South, presents to Southern Baptists challenges to their cultural identity and to their mission. They must decide if they are going to continue to be "southern" or if they are going to become more inclusive of persons who are not the least interested in the southern way of life or in a denomination that is heavily weighted to the value sets of historic southerners.

The demographic shifts in the population of the country away from the industrial North have been dramatic. The fastest growing areas are in the Mountain West, the Upper Great Lakes, the Ozarks and the South. For the Southern Baptist Convention, which has historically been located in the South, these migrants bring little to no understanding of the denomination or its folkways.

The movement of people from rural lifestyles to urban has also been dramatic since the 1900s. Rural areas are witnessing widespread population gains in the 1990s as towns and cities grow thus spilling over into formerly rural areas. However, these new residents in formerly rural areas are not rural people. They are urban. They commute long distances into the major cities to work and to be entertained. They simply live in the suburbs that have invaded the rural countryside around growing towns. Studies published on American demographics indicate that "Three in four nonmetropolitan counties gained population between 1990 and 1994, a stunning reversal following a decade of rural decline."(Johnson and Beale 1995:1) The state of Florida is an example. Statistics indicate that in 1900, 79.7% of the state's residents lived on family farms in the rural countryside. The statistics have reversed in the 1990s. In the state of Florida 84.8% now live in the cities or in metropolitan areas, whereas, 15.2% live in the rural areas of the state.(www.fsu.edu) As cities continue to grow more and more rural areas will be assimilated into the urban context. The rural rebound of the 1990s has not been fueled by births, but by more rural residents remaining in rural areas and by metropolitan residents moving to the small towns and to rural homes. The study

continues saying, "Specifically, 56 percent of nonmetro growth between 1990 and 1994 came from net gains in migration."(Johnson and Beale 1995:2)

The new rural migrants are not moving from the city to work on farms or to simply get away from civilization. Rather, they reflect a new pattern of urban development. "Edge cities", major metropolitan areas developing outside the central city, are pushing the suburbs further into the countryside: "As a result, 84 percent of nonmetropolitan counties that are adjacent to a metropolitan area gained population between 1990 and 1994, and 73 percent had net in-migration."(ibid.) These migrants bring money and urban attitudes with them into the countryside.

Most people now relate to the cities by way of employment rather than depending on the small villages and farms for their economic lifestyle. Even those living in rural areas commute long distances to the city for employment. The average commuting distance to the city of Atlanta, Georgia is 34 miles demonstrating the fact that many people draw their economic resources from the city while living far removed from it.

These lifestyle changes have forced many persons who live in small towns and rural areas to think like urban dwellers. Many rural dwellers, like their urban counterparts, do not know their neighbors. Their friendship webs are more often related to the city than the small town in which they live. Urban dwellers never escape, like their rural counterparts, the pace of the city. Hence, lifestyles are more

complex, more diverse in interest, and more influenced by the urban ethos than the rural.

For churches, the impact is dramatic. Long commuting distances, the opportunities for multi-varied activities offered by nearby cities, and economic change have given persons the opportunities also to commute to the churches they like, to be involved in activities on Sunday instead of church, and economic resources to travel on weekends or be involved in leisure activities that were not available when America was a rural complex.

Lifestyle changes have a dramatic effect upon the churches. Many churches are working to compete with the lifestyles of persons in the culture. However, most are finding they cannot compete with the opportunities that are afforded to people today. Southern Baptists, with small churches at the core of the Convention, reflect in their "opportunities for the week" the lifestyle expectations of rural America in the 1900s more than the lifestyles of the city near the close of the 20th century. These "opportunities" are built around the expectations that people have little else to occupy their time and will attend the church's functions; that they are willing to spend their money for church involvement rather than on the lifestyle the city offers; and that the familial interpersonal webs within the church will be desired by persons who are unchurched. However, Ron Dempsey cautions that unchurched persons have lifestyles that are incompatible with the lifestyles they find in churches.(1997:43) Their lifestyles are simply not aligned with the lifestyle patterns of churched people. Southern Baptists, therefore, must study lifestyle changes and learn

new ways to relate to the lifestyles of persons living in the 1990s if they are to be effective in their missional task.

Churches, caught in the growth patterns of urban to rural population change fostered by edge cities, often find themselves surrounded by new industry, suburbs, and increasing traffic that contributes to radical changes in the lifestyles of the people who populate the area. Many of those churches, unable to cope, wither and die. This fact became apparent to the writer as he interviewed church members in a once small rural community now surrounded by the urban sprawl of a nearly edge city. When members of Bethabara Baptist Church were confronted with the question of reaching the new people living in the suburbs that once were open fields their consensus response was "they are not like us. They are city folks. They won't be happy here." It is no surprise that this church has continued to decline even while the area around it explodes in growth as the nearby city expands.

Affluence has also contributed to lifestyle change. Americans now have more money to spend on themselves than before. David Wells lends insight to the affluence of Americans and to the problems affluence has caused:

> Between 1945 and 1973, the average family income in America increased by two-thirds in constant dollars, unemployment dropped from a high in the Depression of one in three to less than one in ten by 1993, and the American Way of Life rapidly became a byword in many parts of the world. But study after study conducted during this period suggested that although newly prosperous Americans had the money and the leisure time to own and do a multitude of things

> that had been mere dreams for many of their parents, they were increasingly less satisfied with their lives.(1994:13)

Affluence, as Wells has noted, has given Americans more time and resources to fulfill their dreams. The pursuit of these dreams has more often than not been the primary activity of Americans while religious involvement has suffered. Although the churches have benefitted by the affluence of religious Americans, most have not used the money they have received to minister to persons in the culture for whom money has not been the answer to happiness. While Americans and their churches bask in relative plenty, those whose lifestyles are spiritually bankrupt have largely been overlooked. Instead of furthering the *missio Dei* Christians have used affluence to make themselves more comfortable in their lavish sanctuaries. Some estimates of the value of church property in the United States place the figure at a trillion dollars. The *1998 Southern Baptist Convention Book of Reports* cited statistics for the year 1996-1997. The citation included the value of church property held by Southern Baptists as $32,399,005,392, an increase of nearly two billion dollars over the previous year.(Yeats:1998:6) The staggering increase in expenditures on church property was challenged, when compared to mission expenditures, by Convention President Thomas Elliff:

> We are celebrating the greatest Lottie Moon offering in history . . . over $100 million for foreign missions. But considering the $550 million which Southern Baptists churches spent last year in the US on principle and interest for building payments we must ask: Are we really passionately committed to the harvest?(1998:1-2)

Elliff's comments contrast for Southern Baptists the tension they face between total commitment to missions or a preference for lavish institutions. Church buildings in America tend to reflect the aesthetic concerns of the members rather than their concern for world evangelization. They tend to also be homogenous with regard to symbol and structure and suggest little tolerance for diversity within the culture.

Diversity is the watchword of today's lifestyle changes. The racial composition of America's heartland is an indicator. In October, 1995, *The Wall Street Journal* ran a front-page article on the changing demographics of small towns in America. It focused on one small town in Minnesota. The article pointed out that the town was "virtually all white a decade ago "but in just five years has become 20 percent immigrants, mostly Mexicans, Laotians, Vietnamese, Sudanese, and Ethiopians."(1995:1) Today's immigrants are from "vastly different racial, cultural, and religious backgrounds", according to the article, than the "white, European, and Christian" immigrants who came to America in the nineteenth century. The article continues saying "The number of Asian immigrants living in small towns has jumped 42 percent to more than six hundred thousand, and the number of Hispanics has increased 23 percent to more than three million." These changes, according to Calvin Beale, a senior demographer at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, are leading to a "permanent change in the ethnic composition of many small communities."(ibid.)

Small rural communities, where lifestyles were built around family farms, neighbors, family businesses, and local churches, have grown

smaller and have shifted to larger multi-cultural realities. The small towns of America now reflect the cities' ethnic diversity as never before.

Other demographic changes are reflected in the nation. The senior adult population continues to increase each year. From 1990 to 1994, for example, the increase was nearly eight percent. The Baby Boom cohort (79,352,000 persons) now represents 30% of the population and the oldest of the cohort will reach retirement age in 15 years, adding to the increase in senior adults. However, birth rates are slowing. Since 1994 the decline has been over two percent from year to year. The estimated median age at first marriage is higher than ever before, 26.7 years for men, and 24.5 years for women, compared to 1970 when first marriages occurred at 23.2 years for men and 20.8 years for women. Shifts in the age distribution of women in the childbearing ages, decreases in age-specific fertility rates, and declines in the total number of women add to the declines.(Deardorff and Montgomery 1998:1-4) As a result, America is aging. Churches will find themselves growing older without an aggressive evangelism to the young.

The number of traditional nuclear households has also changed dramatically. One in nine adults now lives alone. This now represents 23.6 million persons. The increase has been most dramatic among men: "Between 1970 and 1994, the number of women living alone increased 94 percent (from 7.3 to 14.2 million). During the same period, there was a 167 percent increase in the number of men living alone (from 3.5 to 9.4 million)."(Saluter 1998:1-3)

There has been a sevenfold increase in unmarried-couple households since 1970. Of the children who lived with one parent, the proportion who lived with a parent who has never married has grown by one-half in the past decade to 36 percent: "In 1983, a child in a one-parent situation was almost twice as likely to be living with a divorced parent as with a never-married parent; whereas today, the child is just as likely to be living with a divorced parent as with a never-married parent (37 percent compared with 36 percent, respectively)."(:2)

Southern Baptists have traditionally relied on traditional families to populate their churches. In fact, divorced persons often found themselves stigmatized in many churches and either transferred to another denomination or dropped out of church attendance altogether. Demographic shifts in family make-up will continue to challenge Southern Baptists. They will be less able to rely upon traditional families to populate their churches and will be forced to confront persons who are not married, who are divorced, and who marry late in life and choose to have no or fewer children. These factors will limit the traditional growth of the churches unless Southern Baptists become more focused on the needs of persons outside traditional family patterns.

Demographic and lifestyle shifts challenge Southern Baptists more than any other factor largely because these shifts hit the core of their traditional value expectations. With a missiology heavily tied to traditional values they espouse, a radical re-evaluation of attitudes, theology, and methodology will be needed. However, the

trend is away from all three. Again, in 1998, the *Southern Baptist Convention Book of Reports, 1998*, reports that in the meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, the convention re-affirmed traditional values and issues such as the submission of women to men as central to their mission.(SBC Annual 1998) It is unlikely, therefore, that the Convention will change its direction until declines become severe enough to merit them.

6.4 Religious Orientation.

Today's societal differentiation has stripped religion of many of its former responsibilities and roles. The religious orientation of the culture today is different than in the early days of America. The dominant conception of religion within the culture had been its emphasis on influencing cultural values. Religion was thought to be a primary force in shaping the politics of culture. Oscar Blackwelder said the main role of the church was "to declare moral and spiritual principles" and "to inspire and instruct individual Christians to apply Christian principles in all their relationships."(1948:157) The implication carried in Blackwelder's statement placed religion at the forefront of shaping public opinion utilizing the influence of Christians. Religious leaders, according to Robert Wuthnow, widely assumed that influencing society through religious individuals was more effective than passing legislation.(1988:66)

Public officials also reinforced the belief that religion should influence society. Wuthnow quotes a speech by President Harry Truman in 1946 in which he addressed the matter of the religious orientation

of the nation and its hopes for the future, saying "Without a religious revival we are lost."(ibid.) Dwight Eisenhower in a postwar 1946 address averred that religion nurtures men of faith who are "needed in the building of a new world reflecting the glory of God."(ibid.)

The religious orientation of Americans connected faith to America and to its prosperity. Indeed, some believed there could be no American way of life without Christianity. For many people being a good American was to be a Christian. To be a good Christian was to uphold the American ideal. Wuthnow says "It was the conviction that public life could be influenced chiefly by the religiously informed consciences of individuals that in part accounts for the churches' tremendous interest in these years in membership drives."(:67)

Today the place of religion in public life has largely been diminished through court decisions removing prayer from public schools, through lawsuits brought against religious organizations such as the PTL club, and as a result of increasing secularism. Religion, more than ever, has been relegated to a private affair for millions. Robert Bellah writes "Religion is displaced from its role as guardian of the public world-view that gives human life its coherence. Religion is now relegated to the purely private sphere."(Dempsey 1997:75)

George Hunter, III, highlights the shift away from a general religious orientation where persons in the culture honor the church and Christianity to a general populace that knows little of the "stories" of the faith. Hunter says:

> Consequently, we observe an increasing number of "secular people" -who have navigated their whole lives beyond the serious influence of Christian

> churches. They have little or no Christian memory, background, or vocabulary. Many of them do not even know what we are talking about, and have little or no experience of "church."(1996:20)

In Hunter's estimation 120 million Americans have little to no religous orientation in the sense of church involvement.(Hunter 1992:2-10) Ron Dempsy finds "The result is an unchurched religiosity based on the Christian faith but supplemented by the inclusion of values and meaning from other sources plus the emergence of the idea that faith is a private matter and has no need for institutional grounding."(1997:74)

The importance of the church in public life has been displaced by other institutions. Most churches no longer offer general education for children, health care, social services, or recreation as a leisure outlet for the community as in days passed. The responsibility for community leisure outlets have been passed to county recreation departments, malls, movies, and TV.(:22) Although many churches offer divorce counseling, child care, grief support groups, senior adult ministries, and others, the general populace does not tend to participate in them. The ministries of most local churches are focused toward the members of the church. Community services sponsored by government agencies and social service groups have largely replaced the church in the larger culture. Dempsey sums up the situation by saying "The church that once played a very distinct role in the community no longer has such a role. The church has become one choice among many."(:22)

The shifting in the religious orientation of the culture is a serious matter for Southern Baptists. They have generally drawn most

of their members from persons who have been patriotic, conservative, denominationally oriented, involved in community, and centered in close-knit family relationships.(Roozen and Hadaway 1993:19-35) But today Southern Baptists find themselves amid opposing influences that will make it harder to draw members from the general culture. An effective missiology for Southern Baptists will demand a serious appraisal of the religious orientation of the general unchurched culture. New entry points to the culture must be found. Many of these entry points will be found in the experiences of everyday. As persons look for meaning in life, opportunities will arise to which the community of faith can speak. Southern Baptists cannot be reactive to the unchurched religiosity that surrounds the churches. Instead they will need to be pro-active and focus energies on shaping the unchurched religiosity in ways that will be attractive enough to cause the unchurched to give the church "a second look."

6.5 Implications for Southern Baptists.

In a recent interview, Lesslie Newbigin challenged the writer to think of the West as the new mission field for the 21st century.(1997) Newbigin's comments echo those made to the writer by J.Edwin Orr, in Amsterdam in 1986, when he indicated that there were evidences of the movement of God evangelistically in almost every nation of the world. "America", he said, "seems to be the exception."(1986) If the West is the new mission field, as Newbigin has said, and if, as Orr has said, America is in the midst of an evangelistic drought, the need for an effective missiology is critical.

Given the changes that have occurred within the culture, lifestyle patterns, demographics, and religious orientation, the implications of a needed paradigm shift in evangelism within the mission of Southern Baptists seems to be overdue. No longer can Southern Baptists fulfill their mission of reaching the world for Christ using their old paradigm. They must begin to understand the changing realities of today's world and study carefully the effect of those changes upon the unchurched culture around them.

Such study will force a critical appraisal of the mission of Southern Baptists. It will critically focus on strategies for effective evangelization that take into consideration the shifts of culture. Critical appraisal that is willing to disregard idealistic rhetoric for the sometimes harshness of reality offers hope for evangelism. It will cause the evangelistic efforts of Southern Baptists to be directed more appropriately to those who are at different levels of receptivity of the gospel message.

Southern Baptists need to recognize the potential of reaching persons who are non-churched. According to Dempsey "Most non-churchgoers have been involved in a local church at some time in their lives, normally during their childhood and adolescent years."(1997:46) As such, they have some Christian memory. Yet, they must be approached with the gospel recognizing the barriers that have been erected in their understanding and appreciation for religion. This category of persons has historically been the focus of Southern Baptist outreach efforts. But another group of persons offers a significant challenge for a critical appraisal of outreach efforts directed toward them.

Large numbers of persons have never attended church and come from families that have never been exposed to church at all.(Hunter 1996:20) They have little to no Christian memory. These people cannot be reached with the gospel without pre-Christian cultivation efforts. Reaching both groups of people with the gospel will necessitate critical shifts in the way Christians view the culture around them. Reaching both those with Christian memory and those without a functioning Christian memory will require of the approaches a critical realism with regard to evangelism.

Paul Hiebert says "Christian theologies, like other systems of human thought, emerge in different historical and cultural contexts." (1994:19) Southern Baptists, like all Christians, have sought to root their theology in what they believe to be the revelation of God in history, particularly as it is recorded in the Bible and applied to the culture. Strong Biblical conservatism among Southern Baptists has led them simply to overlay Biblical revelation as they understand it onto the culture. With a dominant religious ethos functioning in the society, especially out of the Great Awakening, the receptivity of Biblical revelation applied to the culture contributed to the prominence of religion within the society.

Today the situation has shifted. People are deeply influenced by both the positive and negative attributes of the culture in which they live and that fact must now inform Southern Baptists as they move into the 21st century. Such a shift will not be without dissent, especially from those who refuse to recognize the problem that mission faces in today's world.

Many forward thinkers who are evangelical are aware of the shifts that are occurring within the culture and are moving from old positions of naive realism to that of critical realism. Critics have viewed the writings of these thinkers as a march toward liberalism and have asserted the certainty of theology as a complete system of thought with little need for revision. They have become increasingly resistant to a critical realism for fear that the trustworthiness of Scripture as historical revelation will be violated. But in doing so, they have brought the majority of the churches into what Paul Hiebert calls "an idealist epistemology that absolutizes ideas over historical realities."(:31) Critical of realism, with regard to cultural, lifestyle, demographic and religious orientation shifts, the antagonists of a pro-active view of missions for the 21st century have become ahistorical and acultural. Hiebert says "Realism looks at the events in the real historical world within which we live and focuses on the nature of truth in specific situations."(:33) This is critical to the needed paradigm shift that Southern Baptists must embrace.

If, in their theology, Southern Baptists will become more aware of the paradigm shifts throughout history with regard to mission (Bosch) they will be more likely to embrace the possibilities for the future such as ministry-based evangelism approaches that are sensitive to the culture. In many ways those who aver a theology of mission devoid of cultural and historical realities become the liberals they loathe. They do so by placing the dynamic of the gospel into a narrow functionalism that is culturally specific, self-serving, and historically inert. Therefore, they tend to deny the realities of mission advance both

Biblically and historically. Realist theologians, however, emphasize biblical theologies that look at God's acts and self revelation in specific historical and cultural situations.(ibid.) Both are needed in the mission of Southern Baptists if they are to be true to what they believe about themselves.

Effectively confronting the cultural shifts that are occurring in the larger society, against the backdrop of critical realism, will necessitate that Southern Baptists first confront the problem of their missiological idealism. Seen most clearly in missionaries who once considered most local customs to be evil and in the suggestion that mission fields were "foreign," little attention was paid to local customs and to the felt needs of people. Although sensitivity to mission fields has increased in recent years, the underlying motif is still exercised within the evangelistic paradigm practiced by Southern Baptists. The world is still viewed as "evil" and "foreign" to most Baptist Christians. A critical realism will shift the view of the world as evil to the world as a place of potential within the Kingdom of God thus placing evangelism in a pro-active role of fostering such potential.

Critical realism will examine demographics, lifestyle, and religious orientation as aspects of culture and will lend itself to more of a mission orientation. Alister McGrath has defined "mission orientation" as including greater awareness of the social context in which evangelism takes place.(1995:161) Given the massive changes that have occurred within the culture of the United States in the last 50 years the shift to mission orientation will call for the best critical

thinking that Southern Baptists can incorporate into their mission and evangelism strategies. Perhaps then the gospel will be proclaimed by Southern Baptists as wholistically as Jonsson has defined it and will make positive movement to the accomplishment of the *missio Dei* that Shenk describes. To this issue we now turn our attention.

Chapter Seven

The Challenge of Postmodernism to the Mission of Southern Baptists

7.1 Postmodernism: Problem for Southern Baptists

Caleb Rosado has said that a great chasm exists between the church and contemporary society.(1988:22-23) The chasm is growing wider as evidenced by the two poles of modernity and postmodernity moving apart and in different directions. The challenge to the church continues to be the need to bridge the chasm and to find ways to communicate the gospel effectively through theological reflection and sociological research. Southern Baptists are especially vulnerable to the widening gap between modernity and postmodernity due in part to their lack of response to cultural shifts. For Southern Baptists the issue of a postmodern worldview may prove to be the most troublesome as they seek to contextualize evangelism within the emerging postmodern culture. The culture of the postmodern is increasingly free of the assumptions of the Enlightenment view that has dominated modernity. As Diogenes Allen suggests "a culture free of these assumptions is also free of assumptions that prevent one from coming to an appreciation of the intellectual validity of Christianity."(1989:8) Southern Baptists have depended upon the structures of modernity to enhance their evangelistic strategies, theological position, and missiological approaches. The systematic view of religion, morality, and scientific method aided Southern Baptists as they categorized their worldview. However,

Southern Baptists who trusted the structures of modernity were in fact often unknowingly compromised by those structures. Modernity's evaluation of success led Southern Baptists to believe they were reaching the culture through their well developed programs. As a result, they often ignored portions of the culture that were resistive due to the clash of worldview. Because of their growth, especially in the South, Southern Baptists did not adequately engage those who were developing a more postmodern view of the world.

Postmodernism, however, with its movement away from the assumptions formed by religion, morality and science challenges Southern Baptists to respond in entirely new categories for which they are largely unprepared. Southern Baptists are not alone as they face the problem. Craig Van Gelder's concern is that most churches are failing to face the postmodern paradigm shift.(1991:414-415)

A survey of programs and analysis of literature produced by Southern Baptists related to evangelism, missions, and ministry reveals a lack of attention to the emerging postmodern paradigm as it impacts the culture. Attention will need to be paid to the shifts that are occurring if Southern Baptists are to be effective in their missional objectives in the decades ahead.

7.2 Definitions of Postmodernism.

The postmodern worldview represents an aspect of the contemporary period in which Enlightenment thought is beginning to lose its dominance. Although many scholars differ in their timetable for the end of modernism and the emergence of postmodernism, Lawrence Cahoone

believes that it is the period of 1860 to 1950 in which Western modernity ceases to be a primarily intellectual and political phenomenon and dramatically remakes the everyday socio-economic world in which average people live. It is the period in which the West and its associated modernity becomes the dominant geo-political force in the world.(1996:20) This modern dominance would therefore begin to wane after 1950 thus making room for the emergence of postmodernism. The emerging postmodern worldview represents a transition from the philosophical thought patterns of modernity and associated lifestyles to an emerging pattern that is quite different.

The ending of modernism and emerging postmodernism is taking place throughout the world but apparently in different stages. Western nations have entered into the postmodern era. However, in countries that are non-Western emergence into postmodernism is less dramatic or easily observable. David Hall writes of postmodernism and China and believes that classical China is actually postmodern.(Cahoone 1996:700) While he believes that China is in need of modernization the Chinese are confronted with an uncomfortable dilemma. According to Hall:

> China must modernize, but the effects of a modernization understood in terms of liberal democracy, free enterprise, and rational technologies cannot but threaten its cultural integrity. China's ritual-based culture depends upon a commonality of traditions that liberal democracy renders quite fragile. The laws, rules, and values that define the Chinese sensibility are immanent within and relevant to the relatively specific character of the Chinese people. The paternalism of the Chinese form of government, its stress upon the solidarity of community over issues of abstract rights, its cultivation of and response to the psychological need for dependency are all delicate enough characteristics to be effaced by the impersonality of technology, the self-interest of free enterprise, and the individualizing ideals of democracy.(ibid.)

Therefore in a country such as China postmodernism may actually precede attempts to modernize or lead to some development of postmodernism informed by attempts at modernization. This would be yet another facet of postmodernism and its reaction to modernism that seems to be part of the shift of worldview occurring throughout the world. For the purposes of this thesis, the characterizations of postmodernism will follow the Western progression from the ancient worldview to the modern worldview and then to the postmodern worldview. It should be obvious to the reader that the West as it follows a progression from modern to postmodern will also be challenged in mission to understand the further complications in nations such as China which may be reacting to modernism out of the characteristics of a kind of pre-postmodernism. The nuances of postmodernism's impact upon the non-Western or developing world must be left to further research. In any case Southern Baptists are adequately challenged by the Western experience of postmodernism. They will be further challenged, however, as they observe how postmodernism affects other nations. Such challenges will continue to impact how Southern Baptists attempt to engage missions around the world. Given such challenges it now remains for Southern Baptists to try to understand postmodernism within their own cultural reality.

Jean-Francois Lyotard describes *postmodern* as the "state of our culture following the transformations which, since the end of the nineteenth century, have altered the game rules for science,

literature, and the arts."(1996:481) Hans Küng says that in the transition from the modern to the postmodern paradigm a change occurs in the "entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on, shared by the members of a given community . . . ."(1988:11) In this chapter, the word, "postmodern" will reflect Küng's analysis though other writers such as Jacques Derrida, Michael Foucault, Diogenes Allen, Craig Van Gelder, Stanley Grenz, Thomas Oden, and David Bosch expand the analysis as they have sought to clarify their own definitions of the emerging period.

Allen, for example, suggests that the postmodern worldview began with the development of modern science--science which began with Max Planck's discovery that energy is emitted in discrete units or quanta. (1989:6) Van Gelder says that after 1890 dramatic transitions occurred both on the technical level in the field of arts and sciences, and on the popular level within the broader culture. All of these fields shared in common the gradual shift from objective reason to subjective experience as the basis for knowing and sharing human meaning.(1991:412)

Stanley Grenz believes that modernity has been under attack since Friedrich Nietzsche fired volleys against it in the late nineteenth century but that the "full-scale frontal assault did not begin until the 1970s."(1996:3) Thomas Oden defines the period after modernity in terms of attitude, conceptualism, and ideological tone.(1992:44) David Bosch contends that the "edifice of the preeminence of reason is being challenged."(1991:350) All such definitions seek to clarify the issue

and are themselves reflective of postmodernism in the struggle to understand, formulate, and conceptualize the structure of the emerging worldview.

Küng believes postmodernism adequately describes an epoch that has only begun in this century.(:10) Stanley Grenz and Thomas Oden concur as they describe the closing of the modern era. Derrida uses metaphor to describe the shift from modernity to postmodernity as "the end of the book and the beginning of writing."(Cahoone 1996:336) For Derrida "everything that for at least some twenty centuries tended toward and finally succeeded in being gathered under the name of language is beginning to let itself be transferred to, or at least summarized under, the name of writing."(:337) It is a work in progress, creative, and yet to be concluded. The modern period can be described as a book while the postmodern period can be described as the process of writing. A study of the contrasts implied by the metaphors will be helpful.

7.3 The Modern Wordview.

The modern era is generally thought to have come into being with the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation.(Bosch 1991:263) Thomas Oden offers the image of two "falls" to describe the modern and postmodern era. Oden says that the fall of the Bastille in 1789 ushered in the modern era and that the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the postmodern era's rise to prominence.(Oden 1992:10) David Bosch

clarifies the evolution into the modern era by pointing to a series of events which helped to solidify an emerging worldview. He says:

> Through a series of events--the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation (which destroyed the centuries-old unity and therefore power of the Western church), and the like--the church was gradually eliminated as a factor for validating the structure of society. Validation now passed directly from God to the king, and from there to the people. During the Age of Revolution (primarily in the eighteenth century) the real power of kings and nobles was also destroyed. The ordinary people now saw themselves as being, in some measure, related to God directly, no longer by way of king or nobility and church. We find here the early stirrings of democracy.(1991:263)

The full birth of the modern spirit, therefore, came to form in the Enlightenment period.(Holland 1989:10) It was through the Enlightenment that the age of reason became the most adequate epistemology and thus the intellectual foundation for the modern world.(Gosnell 1993:18-19) David Bosch writes "the Enlightenment brought about the elimination of God from society's validation structure."(1991:263)

Truth, which once had its locus in God, now could be determined through scientific research and reason. As such "the role of God was dethroned as a valid claim to authority."(Van Gelder 1991:411) The desire to know and to understand the physical and objective world drove the scientific method to its place of prominence during the modern period. George Hunter summarizes in detail six thinkers who greatly influence the thought patterns associated with the modern era. Hunter says:

> Copernicus and Galileo, by discovering the structure of the solar system, challenged the church's traditional understanding of the cosmos. Ptolemy had placed the

> earth at the center of the universe, with the sun revolving around it. But Copernicus and Galileo demonstrated that the earth revolves around the sun, and the earth's rotation on an axis gives us our days and nights; the cosmology assumed from the New Testament through the Middle Ages was now ludicrous.
>
> Newton's theory of gravity challenged the doctrine of Providence, as traditionally understood. Prior to Newton, people assumed that God's providential hand kept the moon, planets, and stars in place. Newton's *Principia* demonstrated, mathematically, that the universe's cohesion could be explained by his theory of gravity, and for many people God was edged out of the providence business. The long-term effect of the Newtonian revolution was even greater, as people came to see the universe as a self-enclosed system, or a "machine" that did not require "God" to explain or manage it.
>
> Darwin's theory of evolution challenged the doctrine of the creation and nature of humankind--as traditionally understood. Darwin's *Origin of Species,* with theories of natural selection, survival of the fittest, and progressive evolution, made it possible for people to understand their species in a very different way--as rational animals, without the dignity and purpose assumed in the biblical doctrine of creation.
>
> Marx's writings provided an alternative to the traditional Christian (sic) understanding of the goal of history. Marx seems to have retained the Judeo-Christian structure of history, but he substituted for Christianity's promised Kingdom of God a promised economic utopia.
>
> Freud wrote a question mark over religious belief and religious experience, charging that belief in God and experiences of God could be explained psychologically, and thereby explained away as "illusion."(1992: 27-28)

As a result of the perspectives, mentioned above, science became the new reality. It became the source of ultimate and objective truth. The modern era came to be conceived of "as the society in which the Enlightenment project is realized, in which the scientific

understanding of the human and physical worlds regulates social interaction." (Callinicos 1990:32)

The Enlightenment's emphasis on reason was the glue that held together the scientific method upon which modernity rests. The Enlightenment emphasis on reason suggested that the human mind was viewed as "the indubitable point of departure for all knowing." (1991:264) One scientific approach which characterized the Enlightenment period was the rationalism of Rene Descartes. Descartes' approach operated on the premise that human reason had a certain degree of autonomy. Rick Gosnell says "Descartes postulated that the human approach to knowledge must be governed by doubt. According to Descartes, humans reject everything which, when tested by pure reason, appears uncertain."(1993:19) The legacy of Descartes assumes that it is the individual's task to justify all knowledge by the use of other disciplines that contribute to indisputable facts upon which they stand.

The modern era also brought with it a naturalistic emphasis. According to Huston Smith "Man's (sic) reason is capable of discerning the order of reality as it manifests itself in the laws of nature." (1989:7) Lesslie Newbigin explains reason as:

> essentially those analytical and mathematical powers by which human beings could attain to a complete understanding of, and thus a full mastery of nature--or reality in all its forms.(1986:25)

Thus, human reason becomes the chief means of attaining belief. Naturalism becomes a sustaining belief when nature is viewed as all

universe. Richard Cunningham explains that "All things come to be and pass away solely from natural causes."(1988:77-78) Naturalism, therefore, views humanity as deriving its existence and validity "from 'below' and no longer from 'above'."(Bosch 1991:263) Transcendence is lost to the naturalists when religious explanations for the universe are no longer persuasive.

Modernity also holds to a humanistic view of life. Pauline Marie Rosenau avers "Humanists are optimistic about the nature of humankind, the potential for improvement in the human condition, and the scope of human accomplishments."(1992:48) Humanists taught that by nature people were good and not bad. Their primary concern is with life in this world and not with life in the hereafter.

A leading proponent of humanism was John Locke who held to three optimistic principles regarding human beings. Locke believed the chief end of persons is happiness in this world and probably the next. Second, he believed, persons' rational powers, if rightly disciplined and employed, provide a means for solving the problems of life and attaining happiness. Humans, he believed, had the potential for influencing the future toward a better life for the human race. Third, Locke thought the essential truths of the preceding views are so self-evident and humans are so responsive to such evidence, that progress in human happiness is inevitable.(Ahlstrom 1972:353-357)

The emphasis upon progress is most visible in the modern ethos. The modern era placed a high premium on progress, on expansion, advance, and modernization. Western colonization, industrial

advance, and modernization. Western colonization, industrial development, economic prosperity, and growing understandings of an expanding universe suggested unlimited progress. Modernity suggested that human beings, working together, could free humanity from want and enrich daily life. David Harvey says "The scientific domination of nature promised freedom from scarcity, want, and the arbitrariness of natural calamity." (1989:12) Progress became in the modern era the end to justify exploitation of nature, people, nations, and economies for progressive thinkers.

Many of the above characteristics of modernity contributed to an increasing secularism largely due to a movement away from the divine as the source of truth and prosperity to science, rationalism, and human confidence as primary ingredients. Arnold E. Leon defines the process of secularization as "the historical process by which the world is de-divinized . . . as far as human consciousness is concerned."(1985:7) Autonomous science and technology became the religion of the public realm, while individualistic pietism became the religion of the private realm. Gosnell says "Religion was, in the course of time, relegated to the realm of the private world of opinion and divorced from the public world of facts."(1993:35) Religion, thus, became increasingly polarized from the rest of society. The gap between the sacred and the secular widened as modernity increased its grip on the world.

Although the picture of modernity seems to contrast sharply with the outlines of religion, Southern Baptists and many other denominations found elements within modernity to be friendly.

Modernity's emphasis on progress, for example, provided an uncritical pre-occupation with growth and prosperity within the denomination. The scientific method provided a context in which programs could be developed using rationalistic structures and deductive reasoning. The optimistic view of humanism provided a sharp contrast that could be preached against with regard to humankind's lostness and sin, but also yielded confidence that Christians could achieve any goals they set for themselves with regard to the accomplishment of their mission. Southern Baptists embraced the structures of modernity that facilitated their growth. But as the secularism of the world became more evidenced in modernity many religious traditions like Southern Baptists withdrew deeper into the confines of their own sub-cultural worldview. The problem has grown more complex, however, with the decline of the modern era and the emergence of a new, more complex one.

7.4 The Decline of the Modern Period.

While much more can be written about the historical rise and subsequent development of modernity, the decline of the modern era can be most sharply examined within the 20th century. Many scholars have now declared that the modern period is at an end. There are several factors that lead to such a declaration.

The foundations which gave preeminence to the scientific method and to reason are being challenged in the contemporary world. Absolutes are being challenged. A researcher in physics commented that

what passed as fact in his doctoral dissertation 20 years ago has been disproven in recent analysis.

James Miller asserts:

> In a Newtonian world, it was possible to conceive of absolute contexts of space and time within which an object could be isolated. But with Einstein's development of relativity physics, common-sense notions of the absoluteness of space and time have been abandoned. It can no longer be taken for granted that measurements of either distance or duration in one frame of reference will be identical to those taken in another.(1989:9-10)

Today's scientists work with uncertainty as perhaps never before. The field of technology is changing so rapidly that old observations are constantly being exchanged for new ones. Absolute confidence in hitherto established scientific realities now run counter to the new presupposition of the world as open and ever changing. David Bosch undergirds this observation quoting Werner Heisenberg saying that the very foundations of science have started to move and there is almost a need to start all over again.(1991:350) Van Gelder asserts that the world has come to be understood as operating with law and chance, both order and chaos.(1991:411-412) Scientists are being surprised as new findings point to an ever expanding uncertainty about the universe.

Confidence in science is being eroded in the general population. Many are frustrated as they try to keep up with changing technological trends such as in the computer industry. Scientific achievements that have led to increasing efficiency in communications have isolated people from one another as they communicate by computer, cell phones, and retreat to their homes immersed in the latest technology in digital

television. People are constantly faced with automated answering machines that isolate the human touch from services once rendered freely. For many scientific advance is more of a nuisance and a warning than a necessity. The explosion of the Challenger served to awaken many to the dangers that scientific advance poses. While science has offered cures to many diseases, increasing resistance within some viruses to established vaccines now offers a new threat. Science is being viewed in the latter days of the modern era as problematic.

The belief in inevitable progress has also contributed to the close of the modern era. Whereas the modern era promised that science and technology coupled with a humanistic positivism could advance humanity toward inevitable progress, the casual observer can point to the 20th century as one filled with World Wars, the Holocaust, apartheid, structural racism, crime, and poverty.

The two World Wars, beginning in 1918, shattered the belief in inevitable progress toward peace and prosperity. Within less than 40 years much of the earth's surface had been soaked in human blood. Regional conflicts have continued warfare to such an extent that never before has so much of mankind been engaged simultaneously in war "war which might be called internecine because it was really a civil war within the totality of the human race."(Latourette 1975:1351) The technology of war has served to illustrate the negative aspects of scientific advance and its horror has depicted the failures of humanism. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are evidence of the destructive side of the modern era.(Rosenau 1992:5)

The failure of inevitable human progress was seen most vividly in the Holocaust. Human knowledge did not lead to human advancement. Instead, the technology and scientific advances in warfare became an instrument of destruction. The concept that knowledge leads to a beneficial use was totally undermined in the Holocaust. Küng reflects:

> Auschwitz is a place where modern science collapsed under the lies of propaganda, democracy was defeated by the control of the masses through seduction and terror of one man and his party, technology resulted in the murder of millions, and industry in the extermination of an entire people.(1988:23)

Rick Gosnell has said that the "plausibility structure of modernity came to an end in the Holocaust."(1993:46) Irving Greenberg's observations are that the assumption of moral progress and the sense of tolerance, love, and brotherhood--images of openness--came to an end in the experience the Jews had in the Holocaust.(1978:457)

Secularization in the modern era led to the idea that religion was to be placed entirely in the private realm. Transcendence seemed to have no place within the secular. However, a manifestation of the demise of modernity has been the re-emergence of interest in the transcendent and in the large numbers of persons who describe themselves as spiritual seekers. Hans Küng has commented "the death of religion expected in late modernity has not taken place . . . ." (1988:16) Robert Wuthnow says:

> There is little indication in recent decades that American Religion has undergone what might be termed "secularization" in any absolute sense . . . religious commitment is as strong as it was 35 to 40 years ago. (1989:15)

Lesslie Newbigin offers an explanation to the seeming paradox of religious interest in the modern era by explaining that increased religious vigor seems to proceed farthest in any society which has proceeded along the road of rationalization, industrialization, and urbanization.(1989:212)

The belief that the process of modernization would lead to the decline of religion cannot be established with credibility. Indeed, the re-emergence of religious vigor seems to point to the decline in the modern paradigm. Newbigin believes that modernity did not "provide enough nourishment for the human spirit."(:213) The narrowed Enlightenment perception of rationality proved to be an inadequate foundation upon which to build one's life.(Gosnell 1993:58)

While it is true that increased religious vigor seems to be a rejection of modernity, the churches themselves are not witnessing a sharp increase in membership or attendance during the latter days of modernity. In fact, most mainline denominations and Southern Baptists are witnessing declines.(Roozen and Hadaway 1993:15) Although new religions have emerged many people have sought to invest in less structured forms such as churches and denominations preferring to gather in small groups and to pursue religious inquiry on an individual basis rather than to attend established churches.(:294-310) The return to religion in the latter days of modernity does not guarantee growth for the churches or denominations who grew during the era of modernity.

There are many other factors that point to the decline of modernity and no doubt, many more will surface. But it is becoming clear to many that an alternative worldview is emerging in the latter

days of the 20th century. Philosophical thought patterns, worldview orientations, and lifestyle preferences are combining to contribute to the post-modern era and to the challenges Christians will face as they live in it.

7.5 The Emerging Postmodern Paradigm.

The modern era owes its beginnings to the development of modern science and to enlightenment thinking, however the beginning of the postmodern era is disputed by many writers. Efforts to place a beginning date range broadly and depend on the individual writer's perspective on shifts away from modernism. Writers like Pauline Marie Rosenau view postmodernism as having evolved during the last 150 years, whereas, Diogenes Allen places its beginning with the development of modern science.(1992:5)(1989:4)

Several other writers look to the turbulent 1960s and early 1970s as the genesis of postmodernism and point to certain indicators. The civil rights movement, the Vietnam war, the peace movement, the women's movement, the sexual freedom movement, the hippie movement, rock music, and the emergence of new religions out of the 60s and 70s are indicators of the kinds of shifts that have occurred within the larger culture signaling a new era.

Thomas Kuhn notes within the scientific method the presence of paradigm shifts or changes which alter the view, implications, and processes of science that are regarded by those who wish to recognize them but largely ignored by those who choose to remain in their

accepted paradigm.(1970:10-11) Such radical shifts serve as sign posts to new beginnings." Brent Waters has stated:

> Postmodern is an adequate term if it is viewed as an interim phrase--a catch-all word to identify a growing reaction to a historical epoch characterized by Western intellectual, political and technological dominance.(1986:113)

The position taken in this thesis is that postmodernism is now a reality that is impacting the culture. The transition is continuing, much as modern science, continued to influence the culture of modernity as it evolved. There is, however, sufficient evidence within the culture today that the shift toward postmodernism has happened and continues. Kuhn writes that when paradigms shift or change, the world changes with them.(:10-11) Joel Barker states that when a paradigm shifts everything goes back to the beginning.(1992:140) Major paradigm shifts birth new thought patterns and possibilities thus yielding a new worldview.(Kuhn 1970:111) Hence, postmodernity is not an apologetic for modernity nor is it a condemnation of modernity. It is a new beginning with new thought patterns.

Evidence for the paradigm shift to postmodernism can be seen within several categories. One of the most dramatic is in the shift to a relativistic and pluralistic attitude. The postmodern worldview is relativistic. Truth is relative to the postmodern. Jonathan Culler has said that postmodern persons view truth as either meaningless or arbitrary.(1982:22) The postmodern person takes the position that different peoples have different concepts of what the world is like. There is no constant reality since each people group interprets the truth of reality within their own context thus yielding a pluralistic

attitude. Situations determine how the world is viewed. Gosnell says "Postmodernists argue that each situation is different and each situation calls for a special understanding."(1993:66) This fact is especially resonant in the argument for religious truth.

Religious truth among postmoderns is perceived as a "special kind of truth and not an eternal and perfect representation of cosmic reality."(Anderson 1990:8) Whereas the ancient and modern worldviews were willing to embrace religious truth in a variety of interpretations and traditions as cosmic reality, the postmodern person tends to focus more on individualistic belief and experience to interpret what is true. Anderson cautions, however, that "once we let go of absolutes, nobody gets to have a position that is anything more than a position. Nobody gets to speak for God, nobody gets to speak for American values, nobody gets to speak for nature."(:183)

The assumptions made in the modern era about religious truth revolved around seeking wholeness and unity although conflict and fragmentation was often reality. For the postmodern relativism does not depend upon wholeness or unity but assumes there is no center. As Van Gelder has observed "life is lived in the local context as the only reality that matters for the moment . . . ."(1991:415)

Given that postmoderns live in the local context, they object to all-encompassing worldviews. Being relativistic and pluralistic postmoderns contend that questions of fact, truth, correctness, validity, and clarity can neither be posed nor answered.(1989:344) Postmoderns live their lives without the need for explanations and are content with uncertainty. They are anti-foundationalists. They choose

to believe that there is no one, correct way to accomplish anything but instead many ways.

Postmoderns have rejected the subject-object dichotomy found in modernity. They refuse to make distinctions between body and soul, the physical and the mental, reason and the irrational, the intellectual and the sensual, the self and the other, nature and culture and reality and utopia.(Madison 1990:61) Postmodernists do not wish to separate body and soul, for example, but to see a renewed connection between the two. They are comfortable with connections between the person and the cosmos. They are often described as wholistic in their view of life. The postmodernist attempts to intermingle the aesthetic, the epistemic, and the sociocultural senses.(Mesmer 1985:406) Thus, they are very interested in ecology, peace, and liberation issues.

Tex Sample has identified the Cultural Left as a lifestyle group that is reflective of postmoderns. These persons seek deeper and more lasting relationships and have committed themselves to issues that contribute to a more just and peaceful society. They have a strong inner direction and are committed to personal freedom issues. Conservation, consumer issues, environmental integrity, social justice, and peace issues are high on the agenda for the Cultural Left. They prefer to color outside the lines and to experiment with life rather than to abide by rules established by others.(1990:25) Postmoderns in the Cultural Left do not believe in inevitable progress nor do they believe they will necessarily be a part of such progress.

Postmodern persons see themselves as possessors of beliefs and not necessarily believers.(Anderson 1990:9) They are often seekers who

will experiment with a variety of beliefs they hold. As Gosnell has pointed out "Postmodernists are concerned with their own lives, their personal satisfaction, and self-promotion and less concerned with old loyalties and modern affiliations such as marriage, family, church, and nation." (1993:87) Tex Sample avers that they use a kind of internal gyroscope that lends a more subjective and autonomous guide for personal life. They refuse to abide by the traditional "ought's" and "should's."(1990:25)

For postmoderns their own personal insights and views are more important than those of organized religion. Sample contends that members of the Cultural Left, as representatives of postmoderns, believe in God but they are believers without belonging.(:11-17) They believe that one does not have to go to church to be a good Christian. They are suspicious of organized religion as a reflection of modernity and vastly out of step with their lives.

The spirituality of postmodern people rejects secularism. They perceive of God as revealing Himself at every turn within the culture and in the world. They are not institutionally minded with regard to church and desire plurality in religious community. For the postmodern person religion has meaning but that meaning transcends the individual and the local congregation.(Bellah 1985:226) Religion becomes a private affair for the postmodern person rather than a public affair. Churches will continue to be challenged by postmodern persons who have a spiritual outlook on life but for many of them have little concern to express that outlook within the structures of traditional organized religion.

There are many other indicators of the shift from modernity to postmodernity. Only a few have been mentioned. However, the characteristics mentioned suggest for Southern Baptists a challenge in the years ahead. It is a challenge that will strike at the heart of their identity, church structure, and theology.

7.6 Implications for Southern Baptists.

The shift in worldview from the modern paradigm to the postmodern paradigm challenges Southern Baptists to evaluate their evangelistic methods and their overall mission to the world. The methods developed by Southern Baptists in the era of modernity were efficient, built upon a common cultural and religious ethos, and presented an appealing contrast theologically to the world around them. However, Southern Baptists today find themselves being limited evangelistically because of their failure to recognize the shift that postmodernism is causing in religious awareness among the larger culture. If Southern Baptists do not investigate the realities of the paradigm shift that has occurred they will find themselves appealing to only those persons in the culture who cling to modernity and will lose the majority of persons who have moved to a new worldview. Postmodernism challenges the very heart of Southern Baptist fervor for evangelism and missions. It will require an expanded view of both to be effective among postmodern persons.

First, a needed expansion must occur with regard to evangelism and the definition of evangelism that Southern Baptists embrace. Although writers such as Delos Miles, Ben Campbell Johnson, George Hunter,

Michael Green, David Bosch, and William Abraham have attempted to define biblical evangelism, Southern Baptists tend to have their own functional definition.

Hunter, for example, offers a three-fold definition of evangelism as: first, what we do to help make the Christian faith, life, and mission a live option to undiscipled people, both outside and inside the congregation. Second, what Jesus Christ does through the church's kerygma (message), koinonia (fellowship), and diakonia (service) to set people free. Third, evangelism happens when the receiver turns to Christ, to the Christian message and ethic, to a Christian congregation, and to the world in love and mission.(1979:26)

Ben Campbell Johnson defines evangelism as:

> that particular task of the church to communicate the good news of God's love to persons so that they may understand the message, place their trust in Christ, become loyal members of his church, and fulfill his will as obedient disciples.(1987:12)

Delos Miles offers the following definition of evangelism:

> Evangelism is being, doing, and telling the gospel of the kingdom of God in order that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, persons and structures may be converted to the lordship of Jesus Christ.(1983:55)

William Abraham defines evangelism simply as "primary initiation into the kingdom of God."(1989:13) David Bosch offers a more complex suggestion that evangelism is:

> that dimension and activity of the church's mission which, by word and deed and in the light of particular conditions and a particular context, offers every person and community, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged to a radical reorientation of their lives, a reorientation which includes such things as deliverance from slavery to the world and

> its powers, embracing Christ as Savior and Lord, becoming a living member of his community, the church; being enlisted into his service of reconciliation, peace, and justice on earth; and being committed to God's purpose of placing all things under the rule of Christ. (1991:420)

Michael Green accepts the 1918 Anglican definition of evangelism. He agrees that evangelism is:

> To evangelize is so to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men (sic) shall come to put their trust in God through Him, accept Him as their Saviour, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His church.(1970:9)

Each of these selected definitions seeks to bring clarity to the task of the church for gospel witness. The official definition of evangelism for Southern Baptists, according to their inter-agency document is:

> Evangelism is a presentation of the gospel of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit in order to bring lost people to repentance and faith, to a commitment to Jesus as Lord and Savior, and to bring them into the fellowship of a local church where they will be able to become more spiritually mature and will be witnesses of the gospel to other people. (Church Base Design 1986)

Although the Southern Baptists' definition seeks to encompass many of the same elements found in the selected definitions above, the functional definition Southern Baptists utilize seems to be much narrower. An examination of materials promoted by Southern Baptists reflects a deductive approach based upon Austin Crouch's plan of salvation developed in 1924. The formula consists of five steps:

1. Show the one with whom you are dealing that he is a sinner and therefore lost.

2. Show the one with whom you are dealing that he cannot save himself.

3. Show the one with whom you are dealing that Christ can save him.

4. Show the one with whom you are dealing that Christ will save him on two conditions (repentance and faith).

5. Show the one with whom you are dealing the duty of a believer in Christ. (It is the duty of Christians to serve Christ: the faithful servant will be rewarded when the Master comes; the disobedient servant will be chastised in this life).(Southard 1992:30)

Southern Baptist's most successful evangelistic tract, *Eternal Life*, is suggested as the guide to be used in evangelistic encounters with the lost. The tract is built upon Crouch's design. Southern Baptists have published millions of the tracts. The tract begins:

1. Have you come to a place in your spiritual life where you know for certain that if you were to die today you would go to heaven?

2. Suppose that you were to die tonight and stand before God and He were to say to you, "Why should I let you into My heaven?" What would you say?

The tract goes on to present the gospel in a logical manner under the rubric that "God has a plan for your life."(Johnson 1994:53) The tract includes a place where the person evangelized may record the date, time, and place of the encounter as a means of remembering when he/she came to faith.

What is problematic with the *Eternal Life* tract and with many definitions of evangelism, is that they are propositional in design and do not offer for the postmodern person opportunities for dialogue, investigation, and examination of the tenets assumed and set forth. Southern Baptists have embraced propositional views of salvation without fully understanding the implications. In order to understand the issue for postmodern persons Southern Baptists will need to examine carefully the scope of the problem of propositional evangelism and the implications carried forth in the view.

Carl F.H. Henry, a leading proponent of a propositional view of salvation provides a glimpse into Southern Baptist understandings. For Henry, revelation comes entirely at God's initiative. Revelation provides certain information about God so that salvation is a consequence of understanding or knowing God's plan.(Henry 1976:44) Henry Knight has interpreted Henry's view by saying "revelation directly addresses our ignorance, not our sin, and it is only if we

accept the truth of that revelation that we can then respond in faith and receive salvation." (Knight 1997:87)

God's divine revelation of salvation is rational and propositional. Because the revelation is divine, it is reliable and trustworthy, logically consistent and without contradiction. Since a proposition is a "verbal statement that is either true or false; it is a rational declaration capable of being either believed, doubted, or denied."(Henry 1976:456) Therefore, since God has revealed salvation's plan to humankind, and since God is true, the propositions offered within salvation are true. James I. Packer agrees that the Bible embodies the Word of God, and conveys to us "real information about God."(Packer 1958:93)

Knight concludes that propositional revelation implies verbal inspiration. Since propositions consist of words, divine authorship must extend not only to concepts but to the words used by the writers of scripture.(Knight 1997:89) The logical conclusion is that verbal inspiration implies the inerrancy of scripture, a position that is embraced by conservative Southern Baptist evangelists.(Criswell 1969:89-99) Much of the debate within the last decade of Southern Baptist life has been over the issue of biblical inerrancy.(Leonard 1990:151-154)

Many Southern Baptists join with others who extend their understanding of inerrancy to also imply that truth is to be expected in "scientific and historical matters insofar as they are part of the express message of the inspired writings."(Knight 1997:89) Such a position means that "truth inheres in the very words of scripture, that

is, in the propositions and sentences of the Bible, and not merely in the concepts and thoughts of the writers."(Henry 1976:205) It is therefore easy to gather certain scriptures together and to construct them along the lines of a propositional view of salvation that must be adhered to in a deductive fashion and to conclude that such a process is in keeping with the revelation of God concerning salvation. This process has been reflected in the designs of Austin Crouch and later in the Southern Baptist formulation of the plan of salvation in the *Eternal Life* tracts.

The problem that arises for postmodern persons is that a propositional view of scripture with regard to salvation, while seeking to be faithful to scripture, has embraced the methodology of the Enlightenment. Knight indicates that the transition to postmodernism is "increasingly exposing this as an accommodation to modern Western culture."(1997:90) Propositionalists often see themselves as defenders of historic Christian principles. Postmodernity threatens inerrancy as an open door to uncertainty of truth as propositionalists view it.

In order to correct rational propositionalism certain critics such as Alister McGrath, William J. Abraham, and Stanley J. Grenz, to name a few, have sought to warn against the problems of rationalism. They do not oppose propositional truth but propositionalism.(Knight 1997:91) The problem with rationalism is that the propositional approach assumes a human rational capacity that is untouched by either sin or cultural context. Henry argues for a universal reason which, through testing for logical consistency or contradiction, can uphold the authority of scripture. Knight argues that there is no transcultural reason. There

are only "fallible human thinkers whose categories and assumptions are supplied by their own cultures . . . ."(ibid.) Knight would not argue that there is no transcultural truth, but would recognize the reality of cultural embeddedness of those who seek to know the truth.

Alister McGrath warns against the problems of rationalism when he examines the problems of human sinfulness. He says that rationalism makes "the truth of divine revelation dependent on the judgement of fallen human reason."(1996:170) Rationalistic designs on a plan of salvation presupposed from God simply do not allow for the possibility of human sinful intervention. The essence of the *imago Dei* within rationalism becomes a reflection of human categories of understanding based on cognitive and logical thought processes. Therefore, to formulate knowledge about God, for the propositionalists, is to know God conceptually. Thomas Torrance criticizes a fundamentalism based on rationalism which identifies "biblical statements about the truth with the truth itself to which they refer."(1982:17) The revelation of God is ultimately personal, and therefore must be "continually given and received in a living relationship with God."(:16) For Knight "knowing God involves not only the mind but the whole person."(1997:91)

For the postmodern person there is a need for a broader understanding of truth. Salvation must transform lives and correspond to reality. Postmoderns need wholeness and community. Evangelism must inspire persons to seek after God for that wholeness and community. Through revelation persons come to know God and are brought into a living relationship with God. A more dynamic approach to the

inspiration of scripture and its revelation is therefore called for especially when matters of salvation are discussed.

Southern Baptists must not be distracted by a rationalistic and propositional approach to salvation. They must take seriously the Scripture which is a medium through which the Spirit of God brings the truth of revelation. Clark Pinnock seeks to recover a more dynamic understanding of God's revelation in which the spirit of God uses scripture to speak to persons in fresh ways and within the context of their experience.(1984:49) Stanley Grenz calls for a reorientation of the doctrine of Scripture under the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and a recovery of the role of the community in interpreting the scripture.(1993:114) This approach has the most promise for evangelistic witness to postmodern persons. Southern Baptists must invest in a more dynamic interaction of the revelation of God through scripture in which the word is fresh, alive, and powerful because of the Holy Spirit's ministry and that interprets itself within communities of faith seekers who are increasingly reluctant to embrace the constructs of modernity.

Delos Miles seems to offer a credible approach to evangelization of postmoderns. While not exhaustive, Miles begins the conversation. His focus on being, doing, and telling the gospel offers the opportunity for the witness to dialogue with the postmodern person and invites them into a more dynamic understanding of God's revelation.(1983:47-55) The issue of being can be discussed with postmoderns because of their belief in the unity of body and soul and the issue of connectionalism with the universe. To be a Christian

offers the postmodern an opportunity to see Christianity as not allegiance to a specific group or within a set of propositions, but in terms of God's desire for the redemption of all creation including persons.

The issue of doing appeals to the social concerns of postmoderns and that of community. Christianity can be seen against the backdrop of social justice issues, environmental concerns, and liberation movements. The issue of telling can suggest a narrative and open ended approach rather than one of indoctrination or proposition. Miles' emphasis on the conversion of not only persons but structures appeals to the postmodern.

Southern Baptists must recognize that their evangelistic witness will have to be much more wholistic and ministry-based in order to appeal to postmoderns. Postmoderns are not easily impressed by persons who merely read a tract to them. Neither are they interested in recruitment to a particular church. They are more open to larger issues with which they may dialogue as they attempt to define their spirituality.

Mission for Southern Baptists must face examination in light of postmodernism. Southern Baptists have often confused mission with missions. Mission, however, is the larger purpose of God in the world and is reflective of the *missio Dei* while missions is what the church attempts to do to achieve the larger mission.

Southern Baptists have participated in mission along the lines of modernity. They have sought to define God's purpose in the world in terms of the establishment of Christianity through evangelism, the

building of churches, and subsequent institutional structures for the support of missions.

If mission concerns itself with the larger purpose of God in the world Southern Baptists must turn their focus upon the kingdom of God rather than the kingdom of the church. If John R.W. Stott is correct in his assumption that "mission concerns his (God's) redeemed people, and what he (God) sends them into the world to do," then Southern Baptists will need to focus on larger issues that contribute to the building of the kingdom of God.(1975:19)

Southern Baptists may, for example, find themselves more immersed in social justice issues, care for the environment, vocal about institutional racism, advocates for the poor, and pro-actively eccumenical as they join hands with other Christians for the sake of the gospel. To focus on the kingdom of God can be most appealing to the postmodern person since they care little for denominational labels or institutions but rather want to invest in community. Evangelism as a function of missions will move away from indoctrination and recruitment toward a more wholistic, ministry-based encounter that seeks to redeem not only people but structures as well.

Mortimer Arias insists that evangelism must be allied to the kingdom of God. He says "the gospel in the Gospels is the good news of the kingdom."(1984:15) Arias promotes kingdom evangelization and is critical of the traditional evangelistic message which "has been centered in personal salvation, individual conversion, and incorporation into the church."(ibid.) For Arias, the kingdom of God is multi-dimensional and relates to individuals and the society as a

whole. He agrees with Bosch that the focus in evangelism should not be on the church but on the irrupting reign of God.(1991:415)

For most Southern Baptist churches a radical shift in mission orientation will be called for. Postmodernism will challenge churches to seek to understand their role within the kingdom of God. They will need to examine carefully what they are being called to do in the world. As long as Southern Baptists are pre-occupied with salvation as limited to simply gaining heaven and avoiding hell they will devalue the postmodern's quest for spiritual issues since they do not fall within the categories of evangelical modernism. To reach postmoderns an activist mission orientation will be needed. Because the postmodern person is interested in ethics, ecology, peace, and liberation issues congregations that show spiritual sensitivity to such issues will attract postmodern seekers. Congregations active in social concern issues will be most visible within the larger community and will be noticed as the postmodern person searches for meaning.

Southern Baptists face their most serious challenges theologically. Recent changes within the Southern Baptist Convention have placed the agencies and like-minded churches on even more conservative theological ground than in the past. Rhetoric suggests that they are increasingly dogmatic with regard to evangelistic concerns and larger theological issues that now serve as litmus tests for fellowship within the Convention.

However, postmodern people are intolerant of dogma. They do not embrace narrowed views of what they believe to be larger scriptural principles. George Hunter has said that they are offended by books in

the Bible that they associate with dogma, yet they are open to the teachings of Jesus because they do not associate Jesus' teachings with dogma.(1992:94) Many postmoderns are interested to know how Jesus' lifestyle can help them with their own.

Instead of dogma, Southern Baptists need to communicate with postmoderns in terms of spiritual formation. Christians must learn to begin with people wherever they are in terms of their spiritual journeys and to walk with them in spiritual formation. Careful dialogue and guidance in the midst of their journey can inform their search for God.

Postmodern persons approve of the idea of spiritual journey. They see life as a journey, therefore, the concept is not foreign to them. Tex Sample has suggested the journey metaphor produces a profound sense of the inter-and inner-connectedness of all things.(Sample 1990:47) Their daily lives reflect their belief in coherent wholeness, therefore spiritual formation built on the idea of journey can offer to them glimpses of the Christian life that has the potential to be embraced by the seeker. The Christian evangelist can communicate the idea that God is interested in their journey as much as He is interested in every aspect of the world around them. Southern Baptists will have to get used to beginning where people are in terms of their spiritual journeys and not seek to indoctrinate them but rather to answer their questions along the way.

Further, it will be lay persons who will be most effective in reaching postmoderns. Michael Green suggests that laypersons "know far more about life, about celebration and friendship, about natural

contacts with their friends than the clergy do."(1970:91) Many postmoderns are suspicious of clergy and view them as narrow dogmatists. In Southern Baptist life there is some credence to their observations.

The importance now being placed on the role of the pastor in Southern Baptist life is at odds with postmoderns. Southern Baptists place emphasis on the authority of the pastor and unquestioned confidence in his theological position, however, postmoderns are not easily convinced of the theological authority of pastors. Laypersons can more easily use inductive means to facilitate their views of Christianity. More recently an example of a lay-led evangelistic tool emerged with Michael Bennett in Australia. *Christianity Explained* is a simple approach to understanding the gospel based upon a one-to-one encounter of a layperson with one who is seeking to understand the gospel. It has been very successful in many countries and is now being used by churches in America. It is based upon testimony, simple apologetics, and personal study. Any layperson can use the material directly without complicated training sessions or memorized presentations such as those now being used as models by Southern Baptists, however, Southern Baptist officials at the Home Mission Board have frowned upon *Christianity Explained* because it does not follow the evangelistic paradigm they have always suggested be used in the churches.

Southern Baptists must allow for apologetics within their theological method. Diogenes Allen presents the possibility that apologetics affords. Allen contends that a culture that is free of the

assumptions of the Enlightenment view is "increasingly free of assumptions that prevent one from coming to an appreciation of the intellectual strength of Christianity."(1989:8) Southern Baptists must not fear the intellectual pursuit of Christianity over dogma. Postmoderns will welcome the honesty that apologetics can offer in a search for God.

In conclusion, the shift from modernity to postmodernity will present hurdles which Southern Baptists must cross. A willingness to cross the hurdles will open vistas of opportunity to dialogue with the culture about Christianity. Churches that choose to move out of modern methods, assumptions, and theological constructs based on deductive reasoning to a world that is more open-ended, concerned with the whole picture, and critical of theology will find many opportunities for creativity and for ministry in the communication of the gospel.

Postmodernists can be attracted to the Christian message by churches that seek to build the community that postmoderns desire, by ministry that is wholistic, by emphasis on spiritual formation and journey, by the use of laypersons as communicators of the good news, and by theological foundations that lend themselves to creativity of interpretation of the appropriateness of the Christian message for the daily lives of postmodern persons.

Chapter Eight

Reconciliation As Foundational to the Mission of Southern Baptists

8.1 Concern For Reconciliation.

Southern Baptist's passion alone for mission and evangelism will not be enough to reach a postmodern culture. Issues loom large within the culture that prevent the hearing of the gospel. One of those issues is the matter of reconciliation. Curtiss Paul DeYoung says that reconciliation is not only our greatest challenge but our greatest hope if Christians are to reach the world for Christ.(1997:v) Without a serious effort to study the problem and seek ways in which Christians can be reconciled to each other and to the larger world, Southern Baptists' passion for the gospel may be ignored by the culture they seek to reach.

DeYoung sums up his observation that the issue of reconciliation is appropriate for the church to discuss. Within the culture, steps are being taken by Christians to speak to the need for reconciliation. DeYoung says:

> In the decade of the 1990s, reconciliation became big news in church life. The Southern Baptist Convention offered a public apology to African Americans for the involvement of Southern Baptists in slavery. Roman Catholic Pope John Paul II of Rome and Eastern Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos I of Constantinople came together for a service in Rome and offered a joint blessing. The pope also issued a letter of apology for the church's role in the oppression of women and called for the equality of the sexes. Billy Graham preached a sermon via satellite from

> San Juan, Puerto Rico, that was simultaneously translated into 116 languages to people in 185 countries in all 29 time zones. The church has also taken the lead in initiating many of the miraculous changes occurring in South Africa.(:xv)

While these steps are necessary and should be commended Christians must continue in their efforts to place the issue of reconciliation at the forefront of their concern. Southern Baptists cannot merely apologize for slavery, for example. They must do everything they can to be advocates for freedom and liberation within every sector of the American culture and in all countries around the world. Reconciliation goes much deeper. Reconciliation confronts racism, formal and informal, gender bias, economic injustice, social ills, and many other concerns that build walls between people.

Reconciliation is also needed to unite the people of God. Church and denominational conflicts weaken the united front that Christians have the potential to achieve in their witness to the world. Christians often forget the theological principle of unity in Christ. The gospel that unites humankind with God is the same gospel that unites humankind with each other. If the gospel is not efficacious in the church, it will not be convincing and credible to the unbelieving world. While the Christian community is distinctive and includes diversity within itself, it should not forget that Christ is the focal point of a unity that transcends much of our diversity.(Knight 1997:195-197) The history of conflict within the Southern Baptist Convention during the last 20 years should illustrate the need for reconciliation of God's people. Considering the depth of the issue,

> San Juan, Puerto Rico, that was simultaneously translated into 116 languages to people in 185 countries in all 29 time zones. The church has also taken the lead in initiating many of the miraculous changes occurring in South Africa.(:xv)

While these steps are necessary and should be commended Christians must continue in their efforts to place the issue of reconciliation at the forefront of their concern. Southern Baptists cannot merely apologize for slavery, for example. They must do everything they can to be advocates for freedom and liberation within every sector of the American culture and in all countries around the world. Reconciliation goes much deeper. Reconciliation confronts racism, formal and informal, gender bias, economic injustice, social ills, and many other concerns that build walls between people..

Reconciliation is also needed to unite the people of God. Church and denominational conflicts weaken the united front that Christians have the potential to achieve in their witness to the world. Christians often forget the theological principle of unity in Christ. The gospel that unites humankind with God is the same gospel that unites humankind with each other. If the gospel is not efficacious in the church, it will not be convincing and credible to the unbelieving world. While the Christian community is distinctive and includes diversity within itself, it should not forget that Christ is the focal point of a unity that transcends much of our diversity.(Knight 1997:195-197) The history of conflict within the Southern Baptist Convention during the last 20 years should illustrate the need for reconciliation of God's people. Considering the depth of the issue,

this chapter will argue that reconciliation is a key component in the needed shift within the thinking of Southern Baptists in regard to missions and evangelism. What is at stake for Christians is the central affection and style of love for neighbor. According to Henry Knight this issue is especially critical within postmodernism. Given the postmodern concern for cultural diversity and the persistence of conflict between various national, racial, ethnic, or cultural groups, the matter of reconciliation becomes vital to an effective missiology.(1997:197)

8.2 A Need for a Theology of Reconciliation.

Harold Wells has pointed out that the gospel of Christ calls us to a ministry of reconciliation.(1997:1) Yet, without an adequate theology of reconciliation that seeks to understand the issue, Christians will continue to devise their own solutions which they believe are in line with the gospel of Christ. It is not enough for Christians to simply inquire as to what they need to believe in order for human relationships to improve. Wells calls for a theology that listens and is obedient to God's revelation in Jesus Christ. He warns that ". . . it cannot be calculated according to our conceptions of what is socially necessary."(1997:1) A theology of reconciliation will require that Christians encounter in Jesus Christ the God of justice, love and peace. Such an encounter will establish the normative behaviour and concern for issues of peace, racial equality, and love for neighbor that makes mission and evangelism possible. Such an

encounter will have the potential to impact the world in redemptive ways. Wells says:

> Since Christianity is alive and influential in various degrees in every part of the world, what we teach about sin, forgiveness, and grace will send its ripples, or tidal waves, deep into the hearts and minds of human beings and deep into the relationships of races and peoples. Thus, we need a theology for reconciliation.(Baum and Wells 1997:2)

The development of a theology for reconciliation must be approached carefully. It cannot be developed in order to protect the powerful or to proof-text certain privileges. Reconciliation efforts constructed on a limited theological base can actually serve to keep structures in place that have the potential to divide people. Many times reconciliation has been viewed as a vertical and individual process, being reconciled with God. However, such a view is reductionist. Reconciliation must begin from an incarnational position, from the ground up, from person to person. Otherwise, the process will not be complete.

John de Gruchy gives warning by using examples from South Africa and the struggle against apartheid. Pointing to the publication of the *Kairos Document* which de Gruchy said attacked "church theology with its esposal of 'cheap reconciliation'," South Africans were warned of the high cost of reconciliation.(Baum and Wells 1997:17) The text of the *Kairos Document* illustrates de Gruchy's point:

> In our situation in South Africa today it would be totally UNCHRISTIAN to plead for reconciliation and peace before the present injustices have been removed. Any such plea plays into the hands of the oppressor by trying to persuade those of us who are oppressed to accept our oppression and to

> become reconciled to the intolerable crimes that are committed against us. That is not Christian reconciliation, it is sin. It is asking us to become accomplices in our own oppression, to become servants of the devil. No reconciliation is possible in South Africa without justice. (1986:3.1,9)

The Kairos Document served as a declaration of protest against the institution of apartheid and accused liberal churches in South Africa of preaching reconciliation as a "subtle way of avoiding resistance against evil."(Baum 1997:188) The liberal churches of South Africa opposed injustice and discrimination, but their idea of reconciliation based upon generosity, mutual understanding and forgiveness on all sides did not have the potential of leading toward a better society. Their call for reconciliation did not advocate the struggle against the political and social structures that were firmly in place which contributed to apartheid. The *Kairos* theologians advocated resistance and struggle and promised reconciliation only after apartheid had been abolished.(Baum 1997:188)

Baum also points to examples from Latin America where conservative Catholic bishops called for reconciliation. However, they failed to develop a theology that demanded structural change in the social order. According to Baum "their theology allows the rich to keep their power and privilege."(ibid.)

Jose Aldunate writes of the conflict in Chile where the church called for reconciliation between the military leaders and those who were oppressed. While the church called for dialogue, the admission of faults, understanding and pardon, the soldiers involved refused to

respond. Reconciliation in Chile between the rich and poor has remained unresolved, according to Aldunate.(Wells and Baum 1997:65) Facing the sobering reality that reconciliation will not be attained with only a limited theology and facile preaching, Aldunate says that only through basic economic changes infused with a spirit of justice will reconciliation be possible in Chile.(ibid.)

In America, the Civil Rights struggle also indicates the problem of a limited theology of reconciliation. During the 1960s racial turmoil in the South not only took place in the streets but inside the churches as well. Many white churches in the South passed resolutions in business meetings that prohibited blacks from attending their worship services prompting Martin Luther King, Jr. to proclaim eleven o'clock on Sunday morning as America's most segregated hour.

While progress has been made during the last 30 years and while many churches now receive Blacks into membership, Cheryl Sanders' observation is that there is abundant evidence that the "Christian church has generally failed to dismantle and disarm the white racists within its own ranks . . . ."(Okholm 1997:143) Indian evangelist Vinay Samuel said at the Lausanne II Conference on World Evangelism that "the most serious thing is the image around the world that evangelicals are soft on racial justice."(1990:29) The Southern Baptist Convention's apology for its support of slavery during the 19th century is an indicator of a limited theology of reconciliation for it does nothing to confront the structures of racism that keeps the majority of its denomination's churches exclusively white. While the denomination's

official stance decry's racism as unbiblical, reconciliation remains incomplete.

Racism is one of the most visible indicators that challenges an inadequate theology. There are constant issues such as peace, social justice, human rights, and others that also demand a more complete theology of reconciliation. Robert Schreiter says that "The church's role in reconciliation can be examined in two ways: in terms of the resources it brings to the reconciliation process, and in terms of the active role it can play in it."(1998:127) Schreiter suggests a more complete theology of reconciliation from three resources. The first is its message about reconciliation and the spirituality that flows out of it. The second is the power of its rituals and the third is the Church's capacity to create communities of reconciliation.(ibid.)

The Christian message of reconciliation must be understood in light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and His lifestyle. According to Schreiter each person can find his/her story in the life of Jesus. It is possible for victims to place their own stories in the story of Jesus and with him become reconciled survivors. Schreiter suggests that the coherence of the gospel of reconciliation with Christ as its locus is very useful to a divided society.(1998:128)

Schreiter also suggests that the Church believes that God has entrusted it with a ministry of reconciliation. Schreiter illustrates by saying that "the Roman Catholic Church expresses that ministry in the sacrament of reconciliation." The rituals of the church illustrate the importance of reconciliation and allow Christians to participate in the ministry of reconciliation within the rituals.

The most important element, however, in Schreiter's approach to a theology of reconciliation is in his third observation. The Church has the potential to create communities of reconciliation. He says, "the Church can create communities of reconciliation, those spaces of safety, memory, and hope that make reconciliation possible."(ibid.) As the Church creates zones of safety and places of shelter for victims it creates a cadre of reconciled people who can serve as leaven in a new society. If the Church takes an active role in righting the structures that inhibit reconciliation it may indeed provide a source of leaven. Against the backdrop of the stories of apartheid, the violation of human rights, war, and social injustices that emerge every day across the globe, it is evident that the Church will have to be pro-active if it is to achieve Schreiter's dream of the Church as a reconciler. Schreiter's vision might become just another exercise in what the Church should be doing were it not for his observation that "Reconciliation could become one way of defining its (the Church's) mission in the world today."(:130)

Schreiter's observation has promise. If the Church could incorporate Schreiter's three-fold model of reconciliation into its understanding of mission, it could have the potential to move outside of its walls and into the culture. There is no short supply of opportunities for reconciliation among individuals, in the larger culture, and in terms of the structures of the society. With a newly defined mission of reconciliation the Church might find more of a purpose for its existence than simply meeting together from week to week.

8.3 Implications of a Theology of Reconciliation for Southern Baptists.

Southern Baptists need to examine Schreiter's observations that the ministry of reconciliation may hold for them new possibilities for accomplishing their understandings of mission and evangelism. They will need, however, to carefully evaluate the implications of a fuller theological perspective of reconciliation in order to accomplish their goals. Gregory Baum offers in his summary of a theology of reconciliation some possibilities to expand Schreiter's model.

Gregory Baum lists six insights that seem to build on Schreiter's model: First, the Christian gospel summons the church to exercise a ministry of reconciliation in situations defined by strife and hostility.(Baum and Wells 1997:184) As a Catholic theologian, Baum wishes to explore the public meaning of love of God and love of neighbor and to stress the role of sanctifying grace in the salvation of the world. Southern Baptists might explore more fully Baum's suggestion of the public meaning of love of God and neighbor. Relying on several texts in the Pauline letters and the Fourth Gospel, Catholics, according to Baum, tend to emphasize God's immanence in people's lives, in their loving interaction, and in their quest for truth and justice.(1998:185) Southern Baptists, as noted earlier in the thesis, tend to define evangelism in more narrow terms of eternal life. A more complete understanding of salvation would emphasize God's concern for the salvation of people for daily living in the world. More emphasis could be placed in the preaching of Southern Baptists on

a salvation that unites people and that urges Christians to work together for justice and peace.

Second, Baum says, the churches have rarely exercised their ministry of reconciliation.(1998:185) Part of the problem, according to Baum, is that churches are so often deeply identified with their own people that they are not considered credible mediators by others. If a church does put forth efforts of reconciliation, they are often suspected by their own members.(Baum 1998:186) This is very true with regard to Southern Baptists.

Southern Baptist churches wishing to lead the way toward reconciliation of the internal theological debates within the Convention have been subjected to ridicule and in some cases have dismissed their pastors for not choosing sides in the battles of the Convention. A further problem, identified earlier in the thesis, is that Southern Baptists have been so regional in their identity that they have been reluctant to serve as advocates for those outside the South.

Baum points out that many churches have understood the solidarity of the believing community and the generosity shown to those within the community as license for not extending the same generosity to those outside of the community. Baum illustrates by saying "The church's attitude throughout its history toward the Jewish people symbolizes the church's near-inability to respect the otherness of others."(:186) Such a tragic heritage has made the church unable to teach its members to respect outsiders, according to Baum.(ibid.)

The highly regional character of Southern Baptists, coupled with a strong sense of Baptist identity, has caused many Southern Baptist churches to not involve themselves in eccumenical efforts for peace and understanding. They have chosen, instead, to not cooperate with those outside of their own Baptist context.

Southern Baptists must open the door wide to others who are seeking peace and justice, racial equality, and economic justice for oppressed persons. They cannot remain exclusive using their programs for their own people nor can they remain exclusive in their mission to reach the world for Christ. A more complete theology of reconciliation will cause Southern Baptists to open wide their eyes to those outside the gate and to others who are attempting to become reconciliers whether they are Christian or not.

Baum's third point is that the ministry of reconciliation is a pioneering activity.(:187) Baum undergirds his observations by saying that the ministry of reconciliation is a bold undertaking that "irritates the more traditional-minded members of the church."(ibid.) Change is never easy. Tex Sample has written that the Cultural Right mindset values its territory and tradition.(1990:58) An example of the resistance to change can be seen in the recent worship wars that have occurred in many SBC churches.

Southern Baptists should study carefully the early church as it moved from Jerusalem to the Hellenistic world. They should note carefully the growth of the Gentile churches and the ways in which the gospel was adapted to the new context. As has been noted earlier in the thesis the demographic shifts that are occurring in the culture

demand openness and present new challenges. Without a pioneering spirit new ways of achieving reconcilation will be extinguished. The church may even find itself left behind as the culture seeks to reconcile its problems without the benefit of the gospel.

Fourth, the process of reconciliation demands metanoia, conversion, a change of mind and heart, according to Baum.(1998:189) He says that whether people are religious or secular "reconcilation transcending a history of enmity is a spiritual process." For Baum reconciliation demands that groups or peoples at enmity with one another must make a leap of faith and be willing to re-define their path into the future.(ibid.) They must be willing to recognize the evils of oppression and be willing to make reparation. The oppressed must be willing to forgive and start a new relationship with their former oppressors.

Southern Baptists have a strong doctrine of conversion. It is a doctrine that is not complete, however. They should extend the spiritual focus of metanoia into the larger culture and into the issues that need reconciliation. Since Southern Baptists see changed lives on a spiritual level during the conversion experience the process should offer them a pattern of possibilities to transfer to the culture. They should be able to envision the outcome of a society that confesses its sin of racism, for example, and to envision a new society free of its evils. They should be willing to examine the full impact of conversion as they have experienced it personally and seek ways to implement those insights within the larger culture.

Fifth, Baum explains that reconciliation demands a common story. (:190) According to Baum injustice and violence inflicted upon a people or a community cannot be properly understood if all that is considered is the material damage inflicted. People function with a collective identity with commonly held stories that define their place in history.(ibid.) Reconciliation demands that the parties involved be willing to examine their stories and to talk about the impact of social injustice upon their communities. True reconciliation will involve the re-writing of a common story that makes room for others.

For Southern Baptists the place of dialogue in mission and evangelism is crucial to the discovery of common stories. Understanding the essentials of a person's story will lead to a discovery of the barriers that exist between people. Southern Baptist evangelism has the tendency to begin with the fervor of witness instead of discovery. However, the fervor of witness cannot overcome the injustices people feel. These injustices serve as barriers that prevent the message of the gospel from being heard. A concerted effort to enter into meaningful dialogue with persons from other nations, ethnic groups, religions, and cultures will provide opportunities for both to write a common story of their interaction. Southern Baptists might be more successful in bridging the racial barrier that exists within their own churches if they would commit to the understanding of each other's stories. A more thorough theology of reconciliation will demand dialogue and the drafting together of a common story.

Baum says that a sixth element in a theology of reconciliation demands leadership in the process.(:191) Leaders will need to exercise

a prophetic ministry as they seek to call for reconciliation. They will note a constant difficulty in mediating God's Word to a reluctant community. Leaders must not become discouraged, however, instead they must seek to find others who will join them and enter into a new spirit for the movement of reconciliation.

Southern Baptists who are interested in pointing the Convention's mission toward reconciliation must join forces and work together to accomplish the needed goal. More emphasis should be placed in their missions and evangelism programs on seeking reconcilers. The leaders must be willing to identify and cross the barriers that have traditionally separated people and seek to engage in dialogue and common efforts to accomplish the goals of reconciliation. This is not easily done among those who have a reductionist view or who hold to a strict doctrine of fundamentalism. Fundamentalism can lead to a lack of inclusiveness which mitigates against reconciliation and dialogue. Southern Baptists must seek more openness and dialogue if the goals of reconciliation are to be met.

Both Schreiter and Baum contribute to a larger understanding of the needed theology of reconciliation. If Southern Baptists are to accomplish their mission and evangelism goals for the 21st century they will need to begin now with a radical commitment to new directions in reconciliation that begins with individuals and churches and becomes integrated into the larger ethos of the Convention that leads the denomination.

Chapter Nine

Contextualization As a Critical Element in the Mission of Southern Baptists

9.1 A Need for Contextualization of Mission.

A contextual theology and praxis(or practice) of mission is necessary for Southern Baptists to adequately reflect upon the experience of faith which is lived within changing contexts. Contextual theology cannot be divorced from praxis. As Boff has suggested praxis is the locus of theology and likewise as Gutierrez has stated theology does not produce pastoral activity; rather it reflects upon it.(Bate 1993:7-11) The community of faith must search for understanding, as Bate indicates, while living within it. Contextual theology is by its very nature communitarian, according to Bate, thus what Southern Baptists formulate in their missiology must reflect cognizance of this reality.(ibid.)

As this thesis has suggested, there is a need for Southern Baptists to shift their thinking about the culture and their missiological approach to the culture. Preceding chapters have charted the course of issues such as postmodernism, demographic shifts and a narrowing orthodoxy that have kept Southern Baptists functioning within the narrow confines of their own cultural captivity and that have limited the scope of their mission.

Carl Henry has written of the dangers of such cultural captivity saying:

> Unless evangelical Christians break out of their cultural isolation, unless we find new momentum in the modern world, we may just find ourselves so much on the margin of the mainstream movements of modern history that soon ours will be virtually a Dead Sea Caves community. Our supposed spiritual vitalities will be known only to ourselves, and publicly we will be laughed at as a quaint but obsolescent remnant from the past.(1988:19)

The missiological rhetoric of Southern Baptists suggests their desire to extend Christian witness to the world, however, unless the churches reconceptualize their understanding of mission in light of contemporary challenges it is unlikely they will be successful in accomplishing their evangelistic goals.

It is not entirely clear that the need for theological reflection, ongoing research, and a contextualized praxis has been addressed adequately among Southern Baptists. Indeed, the Convention's mission sending approach has assumed that simply communicating the content of the gospel, as the Convention understands it, is sufficient cause for the sending of missionaries and evangelists into the world. This is evident in the approach of the International Mission Board which now insists that all of the foreign missionaries under appointment be categorized as evangelists whether or not they are involved in direct evangelism.

While some attention has historically been paid to context on the foreign field of mission, little attention has been paid to the issue

on the home field by Southern Baptists largely because of cultural regionalism. This observation is critical for Southern Baptists in the West because they run the risk of losing their own home field, while trying to evangelize the world, as home regions are becoming more culturally complex.

9.2 Evidence of the Lack of a Contextual Approach.

Southern Baptists have functioned in mission under the passion of communicating the gospel so that others may come to salvation. They have guarded carefully the content of the gospel as they understand it and have attempted to transmit the gospel using a propositionally based "speaker-oriented pedagogy."(Schreiter 1986:60) A speaker-oriented pedagogy based on proposition has been critical to the entire program of evangelism among Southern Baptists. Evangelistic materials published by the Evangelism Section of the North American Mission Board and evangelistic training programs reflect a speaker-oriented pedagogy of gospel witness. Recent works that have pointed to the need for a listener-oriented perspective indicate that the culture is increasingly ignoring gospel presentations that are propositional as well as monological.(Johnson 1994:26-27) It is problematic, however, that listener-oriented approaches are not being explored more fully by the agency charged with development and distribution of such evangelistic materials to the churches.

The missiology of Southern Baptists has also been assumptive. It has been based upon the assumed successes of the past when the Convention functioned within a regionalism that was sympathetic to it. The mission of Southern Baptists to the world has been fully enveloped within the Christendom model and along the lines of colonialism which in modernity functioned efficiently for Southern Baptists. Shifts within the culture of the West from modernity to postmodernity and global changes with regard to nationalism, demographic shifts, and economics have suggested needed changes for the mission of Southern Baptists. Southern Baptists have not been alone in the problem as they have considered the gospel from their own perspective. René Padilla has said that Western Culture has clouded the gospel "in the eyes of the majority of Christians in the Western World."(1985:88) It is therefore critical to Southern Baptists to engage in a continuing study of the issue of contextualization of mission if they are to make the kind of paradigm shift called for as they attempt to share the gospel throughout the world. To engage in such a study will require reflection on the genesis of contextual theology and honest reflection of the ways that Southern Baptists have responded to the issue.

9.3 Contextualization as a Theological Development.

David Bosch has provided a most comprehensive look at the issue of contextualization as a theological development. Echoes of his insights can be heard at times in the experience of Southern Baptists'

missiology. Bosch indicates that the word "contextualization" was first coined in the early 1970s.(1991:420) While scholars were defining its meaning Southern Baptists were in the midst of expansion of agencies, churches, budgets, and beginning to dream in more aggressive ways about world evangelization. Bold Mission Thrust, a program to carry the gospel to the world by the year 2000 was beginning to take form in study committees among agency leaders.

Strategies were being developed along the lines of cooperation and programatic emphases so that by the end of the decade of the 70s the emphasis was in place. Southern Baptists had a missiological plan in place they believed would be faithful to the Great Commission.(Matt. 28:19-20) It did not, however, include serious discussion of the proper contextualization of that mission either at home or on foreign fields. Southern Baptists felt simply assured that their mission to the world was both appropriate and needed everywhere. The design of the program paid scant attention to what other denominations or religious organizations were doing. Bold Mission Thrust was a monolithic penetration driven by the denomination's own interpretation of mission. Bosch shows how churches through history arrogated to themselves the right to determine the application of timeless truth.(1991:421) As denominations emerged they coexisted peacefully with one another, according to Bosch.(:422) That coexistence can be seen in Nashville, Tennessee where the denominational headquarters of both the Southern Baptist Convention and the United Methodist

Denomination are less than a dozen city blocks from one another, but worlds away in terms of dialogue and cooperation.

This reality enabled Southern Baptists to chart a path of world evangelization without ever having to consult any other Christian body and precluded the need to do so. Hence, the contextualization of their mission outreach was never explored in terms of what other religious bodies were doing. This fact was made even more clear in the light of controversy which also impacted the Convention at the launch of Bold Mission Thrust.

The controversy, although distinctly political, was also a clash of worldviews.(Leonard 1990:4-24) Moderates were uncomfortable with the rationalism of the conservatives and sought more inclusive approaches to the work of missions. In many ways, the controversy would serve as a stark reminder of the varieties of perspective Southern Baptists embrace. It should have caused the Convention to step back and consider more carefully the issue of contextualization of their mission within the varieties of human experience.

One possible reason Southern Baptists have not fully explored the need for contextualization of mission is that they continue to strive to complete the intention of the original authors of the texts of scripture as they perceive them. This is essentially a hermeneutical issue, yet Southern Baptists have made it an issue of doctrine. Bosch shows how this is simply an extension of rationalism and the attempt to salvage theology as a science.(:422) As the SBC controversy has deepened more and more attempts have been made to place Southern

Baptists in the context of the original author's intent instead of the emerging context. Conservative SBC preachers and denominational leaders' emphasis on the original manuscripts as inerrant, for example, are indicators of such striving.

Bosch would sound a word of warning at the futility of such an endeavor and its hindrance to contextualization by reminding that "our entire context comes into play when we interpret a biblical text. One therefore has to conclude that all theology (or sociology, political theory, etc) is, by its very nature, contextual.(:423) Southern Baptists seem slow to understand this truth. There appears to be in their applied missiology an imagining that there is some supracultural gospel which can be communicated across cultural barriers and in ways that are consistent with the theology of Southern Baptists. Dean Fleming insists:

> We cannot minimize the historical nature of the Christian faith. A "supracultural" gospel may exist, but we do not have access to it apart from some human cultural and linguistic formulation; i.e., we cannot know it *supraculturally.* Cultural form and supracultural meaning cannot be easily separated like oil and water.(1995:152)

A gospel free of culture is therefore not a human possibility.(Knight 1997:134) The failure to recognize this has led Southern Baptists down the path toward an unacknowledged syncretism of Western Christianity in which "cultural assumptions have been uncritically permitted to determine the content of the gospel."(Padilla 1985:88) This need not be the case, however, as Norman Thomas has said. He believes "when we see

our own cultural biases, we are freed to see the radical, transforming nature of the gospel in new ways."(1998:51)

A proper contextualization implies that each culture must hear the redemptive story and work out its implications within its own particular context. William Dyrness supports this view by saying that the "truth of Scripture has to be worked down into the fabric of our lived worlds, and this takes place only through struggle and interaction with the actual problems of life."(1990:32)

Lesslie Newbigin would remind Southern Baptists that the gospel is addressed to human beings and that it calls for their response. (1989:141) Since human beings exist as members of communities they tend to share common ways of looking at the world. Therefore, the gospel has to be presented in ways that enable persons to make sense of their world in light of the gospel message. Southern Baptists must realize that the gospel is not to be "packaged" in such a way that it can be merely transported from place to place and thus applied.(Bosch 1991:428) It has to make sense to those who hear it. This has been unfortunately the process used by Southern Baptists for decades in their programmatic approach. Newbigin explains that the gospel in context has to come alive and those who hear it must be able to say, "Yes I see."(1989:141) Alfred C. Krass would challenge Southern Baptists by saying that the kind of evangelism that is needed is contextual--". . . an evangelism alert to the current historical and cultural moment in each place where the church is called to witness."(1978:85) This is precisely the challenge that Southern

Baptists face. They must work harder than in previous days to understand the impact of the historical and cultural moments in which their churches exist. Serious engagement with the issue of contextualization must become a priority for the mission of Southern Baptists.

9.4 Issues Confronting a Proper Contextualization.

David Bosch attempts to describe the ambiguities of contextualization and the situation in which many contextual theologians find themselves. In doing so, Bosch provides an opportunity for Southern Baptists to reflect on his findings. Dialogue with his findings can help Southern Baptists see that they must engage and properly react to the issues he raises. Hence, the following discussion of Bosch's implications within contextualization will be applied to the Southern Baptist context.

Bosch's first observation is that mission as contextualization is an affirmation that God has turned toward the world.(1991:426) He avers that "the historical world situation is not merely an exterior condition for the church's mission . . . ."(ibid.) Bosch believes that the world condition has to be incorporated into our understanding of mission. For Southern Baptists, this is a crucial issue.

As has been stated earlier in the thesis, Southern Baptists have based much of their evangelism on a strong apocalyptic. While social action has been a part of the foreign mission enterprise of Southern Baptists, it has been largely seen as an entrance point for the gospel

presentation. Serious engagement with social issues has not been high on the agenda of Southern Baptists as central to their mission. There are indicators of this observation.

The department of social ministry of the North American Mission Board had existed as the smallest of the major departments of work prior to the re-organization of the Board. When the Board re-organized its work, the department was deleted entirely, its staff laid off or re-assigned, and the remnants of the department were inculcated within the work of the evangelism department. The decision was made to do ministry solely within the scope of evangelism. While ministry-based evangelism in its pure sense represents careful concern for the physical, spiritual, social, emotional, and general life needs of persons, it should not be viewed as something to be done in order to focus entirely on the souls of persons. Ministry-based evangelism addresses spiritual need but is just as concerned with all of life's need among persons.

Another indicator of the reduced role of social ministry as a priority for Southern Baptists occurred when the entire faculty of the Carver School of Social Ministry at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary were dismissed by the trustees of the school and the program disbanded as a part of the re-organization of theological priorities at Southern Seminary. Many state conventions do not have a department of social ministry. Much of the work of social ministry is instead assumed within the work of other departments when needed. Southern Baptists are engaged in ministries to the poor and needy, especially in

times of disaster relief, but these ministries are largely in the form of projects. Issues of social justice have generally been left unmet. The small emphasis work of the Christian Life Commission which sought to address issues of social justice for Southern Baptists was disbanded by action of the Convention.

Southern Baptists must correct this problem. In the words of Bosch, they have to remember that "Christ is where the hungry and sick are, the exploited and the marginalized."(ibid.) Proper contextualization of the mission of Southern Baptists will require them to engage the world and to take seriously the problems of the world through the power of reconciliation, ministry to the poor and needy, liberation and salvation for those without hope. Social action cannot be seen as a project or an additive to the mission of Southern Baptists when they desire a license to share the gospel. Rather, they must turn toward the world with redemptive healing as well as a redemptive message.

John Jonsson has identified part of the problem that has kept Southern Baptists from engaging the world in a properly contextualized mission. Jonsson refers to the problem of a dialectical schematic that has kept the gospel and social involvement at opposite poles.(1983:1-10) His observations are accurate and have been reflected in the structures of the agencies of the convention that are dichotomized into evangelism programs, social ministry programs, and mission programs.

Among Southern Baptists the tendency is to define the gospel in terms of preaching and witnessing. Jonsson says:

> It is to be regretted that the Gospel, encased within the dialectical schematic, is understood to have its locus in the pole of "preaching". The Gospel is assumed in this sense to be the verbalisation of the Gospel tradition. Here the Gospel as preaching is restricted to rhetoric and oratory. When the Gospel is conceptualised in this way, the role of diakonia is humanised to the point where it is the antithesis of the Gospel. For this reason, the programme of extending the scope of mission, merely by acknowledging the need for Christian acceptance of social responsiblilty (Lausanne 1974), does not resolve the problem at all. All this does is to ally "social concerns" with "Gospel proclamation." Here, evangelism is understood to be the Gospel, and social concern is viewed as adjunct to the Gospel. The *diakonia* of social responsibility is treated as nothing more than an adjunct to the *eschaton* of salvation. (1983:6)

Jonsson is right in saying that the ". . . kerygmatic character of mission cannot function within a dialectical schematic where the Gospel is fragmented into polarities, with mission becoming the synthesis of these polarities."(ibid.) However, this has been precisely the pattern of mission within the Southern Baptist context. Measurements of the effectiveness of mission have usually been limited to the number of converts made, churches established, or mission points developed and not the wholistic impact of mission that transforms not only human beings but the culture as well. According to Jonsson "Mission is only kerygmatic when *all the roles of mission* are truly acknowledged to be ingredient to the Gospel."(ibid.) For Jonsson the biblical perspective of mission is best described in terms of a prism than in terms of a dialectical process. The gospel becomes the prism that captures the light of Christ and refracts that light in multivariant ways throughout the culture.(ibid.) This model is more in keeping with a contextualized approach to mission that allows the gospel to penetrate

the context and touch every element of need with it. Rather than a dependence upon programs devised for evangelistic witness or programs devised to meet social needs, the gospel in its fullness touches every vulnerable need point.(Jonsson 1984:3)

A second observation from Bosch is that mission as contextualization involves the construction of a variety of "local theologies."(1991:427) The issue of local theologies has not been explored fully by Southern Baptists and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to construct such a theology, however, some observations can be made of the need.

Southern Baptist churches have tended to look the same in a variety of locales. The pattern has not deviated much on the foreign field. For many years Southern Baptists on the foreign mission field sought to transplant church structures in a noncontextualized way. Bosch alludes to the tendency of missions that operated in a noncontextualized way from the belief that Western theology had universal validity.(1991:427) All that needed to be done was simply to transplant theology and ecclesiology to the foreign field. This tendency has been a philosophical construct among Southern Baptists. It is even more evident on the home field where new churches resemble the pattern of older established ones regardless of context. The context, however, is shifting rapidly.

The realities of postmodernism are shaking the foundations of assumption in Southern Baptist churches as they attempt to reach the culture of the United States. Many churches are realizing that the

culture around them is giving more shape to the lives of people than the gospel they proclaim. An example can be seen in the continued emergence of the role of women in the marketplace. Women wish to have a greater voice in business, education, politics, and are re-shaping traditional role assumptions. Robert Schreiter points out that old patterns became problematic for women as they "discovered widespread exclusion of their experience from the mainstream of Christian reflection."(1986:3) Many men, Schreiter says, found that the theology they had learned in their home churches was suddenly inadequate when measured against the questions they faced in the world of work.(ibid.) The Southern Baptist Convention, however, still insists on defining for women their "proper" role within church life. Many of the churches are finding that the direction of the policy makers within the Convention leadership fails to work in the local context.

Frustration can also be seen as churches seek to apply programs that seem to meet with success in one context only to fail when applied in a different context. Several mega-churches have furnished guidelines to their successes to local pastors who attend their conferences and who wish to duplicate on their local fields the same successes. In most cases, however, the local pastors find that they cannot easily adapt the assumed successes. Part of this problem has been in the way Southern Baptists have adopted a corporate model for their churches and agencies. A "one size fits all" concept has historically been the pattern of programming released from the agencies

to the churches leading them to believe that every cultural context was the same. As has been shown such thinking falls short of reality.

Bosch and Schreiter would suggest that local theologies develop as a result of interaction within cultures. In those cultures where ideas emerge and where decisions are made on a communal basis, new patterns of theology are emerging in much the same way.(Schreiter 1986:4) It is critical to Southern Baptists to examine the reality of the postmodern context at home and to seek a more indigenous theology at home and abroad.

Southern Baptists need not fear the development of local theologies. Newbigin argues that it is the job of Christians on mission to furnish the congregation with the essentials of the faith and then to leave the church to grow and to embody the gospel within its own cultural context. (1989:147) For Southern Baptists the need to study carefully how the gospel takes root in a local context is critical to further expansion of their mission.

Bosch's third observation warns against relativism and the danger of absolutism of contextualization.(1991:428) Citing the dangers of universalizing one's own theological position and making it applicable to everyone as Western theology has been want to do, Bosch warns that it is equally problematic for Third World theologies to adhere to the same and to merely replace old theologies with new ones.(ibid.) This pattern of action also applies to Southern Baptists who are pressing for new forms of worship in contemporary expression. Worship wars are developing within Southern Baptist life that often divide churches.

While contemporary forms may be effective in one context they are often not simply transported to another context so easily. Churches that divide over issues in worship find themselves distracted from their overall mission.

Another problem relates to the current division among Southern Baptist churches over theology. Most Southern Baptist churches are small in size. They are made up of people who have grown up in the churches, especially in rural areas, and maintain loyalty to the church along family lines. They are generally unaffected by the controversies within the Convention. They have always been a part of the denominational structure and have no desire to depart from such a relationship. However, especially in the cities where the churches are urban, larger, and more diverse, the issues of the controversy have some effect. It is usually the pastor's leadership that tends to define whether or not the church will follow the denomination along traditional lines or split away from the convention to a more moderate stance and ally with other churches who are themselves moderate. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, made up of moderate churches who have left the SBC, has often been guilty of forging their identity in terms of not being like the SBC. Their national gatherings have often been a celebration of the fact that they are different theologically than the SBC. However, they are guilty of tailor-making their theological position based upon a reaction against the SBC and are driven by those who wish to somehow recover what they felt they once had before the SBC controversy. Many observers have wondered what the Cooperative Baptist

Fellowship will become once the founders are gone and the controversy is a far distant memory in the minds of younger persons. The context of the controversy which founded the divisions among Southern Baptists has had a great impact upon the Convention and has forced both groups to adhere to their relative contexts. As a result, the energy needed for mission has been distracted by the relativism of each division's theological position.

Bosch's fourth point of contextualization reacts to reading the signs of the times.(ibid.) The question is how are we to interpret God's action in history seriously and seek to participate in it? The church must be able to watch the flow of events and correctly discern where God is working. Bosch warns that Christians must be suspicious of those who speak for God in authoritative ways and who seem to have privileged knowledge to interpret the context.(:430)

Southern Baptists should heed Bosch's warnings well. With such a strong corporate identity based in its agencies and national leaders who are often charismatic preachers Southern Baptists have the potential to be led astray. Writer Henry Blackaby has encouraged Christians to face the challenge of discerning the activity of God within history by simply asking the question prayerfully "Lord, show me today where you are working and let me join you there."(1990:15) Churches should seek to be on mission guided by Blackaby's suggestion. They should be able to measure the responses to Blackaby's question by heeding Bosch's suggestion of the lodestars which indicate God's will and presence in the context. Bosch says:

> Where people are experiencing and working for justice, freedom, community, reconciliation, unity, and truth, in a spirit of love and selflessness, we may dare to see God at work. Wherever people are being enslaved, enmity between humans is fanned, and mutual accountability is being denied in a spirit of individual or communal self-centrism, we may identify the counter-forces of God's reign at work.(1991:431)

As the context of postmodernism becomes more complex and as the demands of mission overseas becomes more critical Southern Baptists must more than ever learn to discern the times and to be ever watchful and guided by the Spirit of God.

Bosch continues in his discussion by stating that in spite of the crucial nature and role of context, it can never be taken as the sole and basic authority for theological reflection. Praxis needs the critical control of theory, according to Bosch.(ibid.)

Southern Baptists are highly pragmatic. Their approach to mission has always been one of emphasis on efficiency. The cost of a praxis that is efficient, however, may be too high if the theoria is absent. Southern Baptists must always seek to contextualize mission based upon what is true and just. Such action may produce small results and require extended effort, but the abstract issues of truth and justice demand attention. Churches on mission must spend the time needed to formulate a theology of mission that is based on truth and not based entirely upon the praxis of programs.

Quoting Stackhouse Bosch argues that we are distorting the entire contextualization debate if we interpret it only as a problem of the relationship between praxis and theory. There is the need for poiesis or imaginative creation. There is also a need for beauty and the rich

resources of piety, worship, love, and mystery according to Bosch.(ibid.) Southern Baptists would be well served to remember this fact. The gospel, properly contextualized in the lives of persons, has the potential to produce such beauty. The richness of culture can be brought into a proper contextualization and add depth to worship, piety, and awe. Southern Baptists should not be afraid to let the context contribute creatively to the praxis of mission.

Bosch's final point is that the best models of contextual theology succeed in holding together in creative tension theoria, praxis, and poiesis.(ibid.) Bosch's point is well taken and needs to be at the heart of Southern Baptists' mission and evangelism efforts. The emphasis needs to be placed, however, upon the creative tension between theoria, praxis, and poiesis. It will not do to merely address the issues separately. They must inform one another and function in a wholistic manner. Should that occur, Southern Baptists have the possibility to being on mission in more effective ways that reflect the heart of God.

9.5 Contextualization as Ongoing Process.

Southern Baptists are at a turning point in history with regard to the way they have been on mission. In an article in the *Alabama Baptist*, editorial writers raised the issue of traditional mission among Southern Baptists saying that traditional Baptist methods of mission need to be redirected. Bill O'Brien, director of the Global Center at Samford University and former Foreign Mission Board executive

indicated that churches and individuals "...no longer need agencies and institutions to be their link to the rest of the world."(1998:8) O'Brien insists that churches and individuals must personalize their mission involvement. This is a major departure from the assumptions of mission methodology traditionally embraced by Southern Baptists. Southern Baptists have the potential to rethink the issue of the contextualization of the gospel within cultures and thus become more effective in their missiology or they may simply choose to continue in the same paradigm they have functioned within for generations. However, Tony Campolo warns that if they do continue in the same paradigm they will "...find they are going to be left behind in 25 years..."(ibid.) To fail to recognize the need for a proper contextualization of mission and to continue with traditional methods and assumptions in the face of changing cultures will be to ignore the warnings of those who are calling for change both within and without the denomination.

With a high view of Scripture, Southern Baptists would do well to affirm Lesslie Newbigin's observation:

> that true contextualization accords the gospel its rightful primacy, its power to penetrate every culture and to speak within each culture, in its own speech and symbol, the word which is both No and Yes, both judgement and grace.(1989:152)

If Southern Baptists wish to remain true to the gospel, they will work to contextualize the gospel within the postmodern world and in every context in which they are involved.

Paul Hiebert offers several comments that have the potential to aid Southern Baptists in understanding how to begin the process of critical contextualization. In an article on contextualization Hiebert engages the work of Jacob Loewen and John Geertz who developed a method of contextualization among the Wanana of Panama in looking at the issue.(1987:109) His observations are helpful for Southern Baptists to consider.

Contextualization will require a thorough exegesis of the culture.(ibid.) Regardless of whether Southern Baptists are engaging the home field or the foreign field they must learn the skill of exegesis of culture. They must learn to understand the structures of the culture with its norms and customs. The temptation to treat, especially at home, all geographic regions in the same way does not take into consideration the history of the region, its customs, its prejudices, its speech, or any of the distinctives that give regions of the country their own particular flavor. As Hiebert says "the purpose here is to understand the old ways, not to judge them."(ibid.) The situation is especially crucial overseas.

Learning how to uncritically gather and analyze traditional beliefs and customs can shed new light on how people listen, how they process knowledge, and how they synthesize what they learn. Criticism or lack of appreciation will tend to distort or discourage any further dialogue. As Southern Baptists continue to expand into the regions of the United States and establish churches, they would do well to take

seriously the issue of the exegesis of the culture in which they desire to plant churches.

A second consideration is the exegesis of the scripture and the building of a hermeneutical bridge.(Hiebert 1987:109) The penetration into the new region or culture will demand that the scriptures are allowed to be studied within the new context and to allow questions to be raised which can be explored between the missionary and those within the community. Proper translation of the biblical message into the cognitive, affective, and evaluative dimensions of another culture is crucial.(Hiebert 1987:109) Persons must be enabled to clearly grasp the biblical message as it was originally intended, or as Hiebert says, it will be distorted.(ibid.)

As persons study the scriptures and raise questions they must be encouraged to discern the truth within the grid of their own cultural context and understanding. Here the evangelist or missionary has the opportunity to explain and to clarify the responses that are made so that the gospel is not distorted by the cultural context.

A third step in the process has to do with critical response as people corporately evaluate their own past customs in light of new biblical understandings.(Hiebert 1987:110) As people evaluate their own culture in light of the scripture they are able to draw upon the strengths of the cultural support of the truth. Hiebert says that the people understand the culture better than the missionary and they are better able to critique their culture than is the missionary. They must be encouraged to apply what they have discerned to their lives and

to their context. As a result, the people may create new symbols and rituals to communicate Christian beliefs in forms that are indigenous to their own culture.(ibid.) As the gospel meets the reality of people of different cultures there is a mutual enrichment that occurs.(Bate 1993:265) According to Bate, this meeting and enriching process ". . . is what is meant by inculturation. However at the centre of the process is not only the Good News, but Jesus himself."(ibid.)

The issue of inculturation is vital to Southern Baptists' understanding of a more contextualized mission. Writing for the South African context, Bate suggests two tasks in inculturation that also speak to the mission of Southern Baptists as they attempt to understand the process:

> Firstly it attempts to discover the Jesus who is already present in the culture and to allow him to come into view. This is the attempt to allow the risen Christ, who has already redeemed Africa to be manifest from within the traditions, history, and culture of the people.(1993:266)

For many Southern Baptists the first task Bate suggests will present a significant obstacle. While Bate says that a model of inculturation attempts to discover the Jesus who is already present in the culture and to allow him to come to view, typical Southern Baptists have grown up hearing preaching that views the culture as needy with regard to Jesus and not at all cognizant of Jesus already present in the culture. Most of the urgency for evangelistic witness is based upon the idea of a culture devoid of the Christ. Southern Baptists need to become more observant of the actions of the Saviour within the culture and the reality of Christ's presence already within the culture.

Bate suggests a second task of inculturation by saying that the model ". . . revolves around the attempt to transform the Christ who has been preached within a Western cultural matrix into an African."(ibid.) While Bate writes for a South African context, the advice he gives in the second task is also instructive to Southern Baptists. The impact of the Western cultural matrix has not been limited to Africans or to any other nation to which Southern Baptists have sent missionaries. It has been shared lavishly throughout the world to which Southern Baptists have gone on mission.

The American culture itself is also deeply affected. Churches have tended to look more American than Christian in some instances. Given the increased demographic changes that are sweeping the United States, especially with regard to immigration, churches cannot afford to continue to propagate a Western cultural matrix as the model for mission within the country. The reality of postmodernity and its rejection of much that is Western in ideal confronts the American church daily. It will become increasingly important that the ". . . incarnational and redemptive dimensions of the Christian message both play an essential role in the process of inculturation which has Jesus Christ as its subject."(ibid.) This might well imply what Bate has called much ". . . deconstruction, purifying, clearing away and cleaning up of the structures, vessels, and containers which were the vehicles in which the missionaries brought Jesus."(ibid.) Indeed, it will call for a paradigm shift in the way Southern Baptists have traditionally approached mission and evangelism.

Finally, Hiebert says, new contextualized practices may emerge.(1987:110) Having led people to analyze their old customs in light of biblical teaching the evangelist will be able to encourage people to arrange the practice of their new faith in their own context. Hiebert sums up his observations by saying:

> Such a ritual will be Christian, for it explicitly seeks to express biblical teaching. It will also be contextual, for the church has created it, using forms the people understand within their own culture.(ibid.)

The processes described by Hiebert have to be carefully constructed and always carried out under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and in the community of faith seekers. The possibilities for a proper contextualization are often beyond the expectations of persons on mission. As Newbigin has said the gospel comes alive in a way that "the evangelist has never dreamed of, and has effects which he never anticipated."(1989:153)

The promise of serious engagement with the issue of contextualization offers Southern Baptists the opportunity to be surprised by God. It offers them an opportunity to get beyond a narrow cultural response to the gospel and away from colonial methodologies. The issue should be high on the agenda of all serious missiologists who function within the scope of Southern Baptist life. It has the possibility of leading Southern Baptists to a more kingdom oriented approach to mission.

Chapter Ten

The Kingdom Church Model: Needed Paradigm Shift

10.1 Movement Toward a Paradigm Shift.

Throughout this thesis the need for a paradigm shift in the contextualization of mission and evangelism among Southern Baptists has been suggested. Problems have been highlighted that build the case for a major change. Each of the problems cited has suggested the direction of the change that is needed. The following chapter brings together the observations of this thesis and suggests the direction that needs to be charted for the mission of Southern Baptists in the 21st century.

Shifting the mission and evangelism paradigm for Southern Baptists will not be without problems. A major hurdle to be overcome will be the need for Southern Baptists to move beyond an assumptive position that they are in the words of Bill Leonard, "God's last and only hope."(1990:1) For most Southern Baptists who have grown up in the churches, the mission and evangelism efforts of the denomination have interpreted the assumptive position that Southern Baptists are indeed equipped to conquer the world for Christ. The assumptive position that has been taken has generally not allowed for questioning of current methods, theological foundations, or an exploration of the obstacles presented by the postmodern world.

A second hurdle must be theological in nature. Southern Baptists must face the fact that their understandings of salvation only in terms

of the apocalyptic must be modified. They must understand the wholistic nature of salvation in terms of not only soul but of the total experience of humankind. Writing on the need for a rediscovery of theology within the experience of human life, John Jonsson calls for a retranspositionalization process. According to Jonsson:

> Retranspositionalization relates to the biblical exegete's being retransposed in mind-set from the pursuits of abstract meaning to the encounter with the concrete biblical intention in human life.(1998:67)

He aptly explains ". . . within the process of retranspositionalization, theology becomes implicated with every aspect of socio-human life and concern . . . ."(1998:75) Social justice and ministry issues must be taken seriously and viewed as a critical theological argument. World religions will need to be viewed more inclusively through the lens of Divine revelation to all humankind. Southern Baptists must take seriously the reality of Divine revelation expressed in world religions and they must learn how to express their sense of the uniqueness of Christ within the context of world religions.

Approaching salvation as exclusively the end goal for persons ignores the present reality of the human experience and of the dynamic process of faith development. Simply believing that Jesus will come again to receive the saved and to usher them into a perfect world ignores the words of Jeremiah 9:23-24. In this passage God wishes to establish steadfast love, justice, and righteousness on the earth.

These are the issues in which the Lord delights, according to Jeremiah. It is notable that God wishes to establish these on the earth and does not speak of them as needing to be established in heaven.(Cassidy 1997:17-23) These attributes are already in the heavenly realm, but they need to be on the earth. Southern Baptists' evangelistic concerns should take seriously the earth issues that affect all of humanity.

A third hurdle that will need to be crossed is the eccumenical barrier. An assumptive position that believes Southern Baptists can evangelize the world better than others ignores cooperation with Christians all around the globe. More needs to be done across denominational lines and in cooperation with other Christians to accomplish mission to the world. Interfaith dialogue and cooperation is essential to a paradigm shift that will renew the mission of Southern Baptists.

A fourth hurdle is a sober encounter with demographic changes, postmodernism, and the need for a contextual approach to mission. The regional nature of Southern Baptists has insulated them in the past from the problems of demographic change, worldview shifts, and the need to understand the dynamics of culture. They find themselves in a different world today that will require facing the challenges that have been unmet and that threaten to place them in a small sub-cultural position if they fail to take seriously what is happening in the world. Denominational leaders need to listen to the work of sociologists and missiologists. The agencies need to embrace dialogue with scholars who are studying trends. Churches need to move away from a programatic

approach designed for religiously oriented persons toward an incarnational model of mission that will place the church among pre-Christian persons. Engaging the culture, instead of insulating away from it, is a must for the future of Southern Baptists.

While there are many other hurdles that need to be crossed in order to accomplish a major paradigm shift in the mission of Southern Baptists, the corporate hurdle is the most formidable for Southern Baptists. Since the 1950s the corporate model of denominational life and church life has dominated in the convention. Stated earlier in the thesis, the corporate model has caused churches to invest in cooperation as the model for mission and to fund home and foreign missions by sending money to central mission agencies. The passion for mission has been delegated, along with funds, to the work of agencies who send others on mission for the churches. As a result, the passion of local churches for mission has been generally local or community based and has not been inclusive of the world except through the work of the mission sending agencies they sponsor. The average church member is led to feel that giving money to missions is the sum total of mission involvement to the world.

The evangelistic passion of churches is also limited by the corporate model. Evangelism programs are passed to the churches by the agencies for churches to implement. Little consideration is given to the context in which the church finds itself. It is rather assumed, in a corporate sense, that what will work in one part of the country will work in the whole of the nation. This characteristic can be

illustrated by the major programmatic emphases promoted by the convention for doing evangelistic work. Programs such as Celebrate Jesus: 2000 assume that the methods contained in the program can be accomplished everywhere. Therefore, evangelism is limited and not practiced in creative or contextual ways by the churches.

The remainder of the thesis will, therefore, concentrate on the paradigm shift that needs to happen within the mission of Southern Baptists. It will be suggested that the kindom model for mission and evangelism, rather than a corporate model, holds the most promise for the paradigm shift that needs to occur among Southern Baptists as they attempt to carry out their mission to the world.

10.2 The Validity of a Kingdom Model for Mission.

In order to suggest a paradigm shift for mission and evangelism that is constructed away from a corporate model and toward a kingdom model, it will be necessary to examine the concept of the kingdom of God. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider every aspect of the kingdom of God, however, foundational concepts need to be explored to properly apply them to a new model for mission and evangelism for Southern Baptists.

Given the evidence that evangelism is central to the mission of Southern Baptists the kingdom of God becomes ". . . an important image for understanding the biblical vision of God's saving activity."(Driver 1997:84) God's saving activity, however, must be enlarged within the vision of Southern Baptists. It must focus on the entirety of the

human situation and cannot be limited to the spiritual. The kingdom model has the potential to turn the churches inside out rather than allowing them to focus inward thereby overlooking the human situation. While most Christians indicate that they believe in mission to the world "the outward thrust of Christians and Christian communities into the world for the conversion of every human situation in Jesus Christ remains problematic."(Jonsson 1998:78) A shift to a kingdom model will radically change the focus of most churches and challenge most Christians in ways that may make them uncomfortable. Christians cannot remain "at ease in Zion." Jurgen Moltmann indicates that the ideal of Western progress suggests that Christians can lead a life free from pain or suffering, but such a vision is impossible because it inflicts suffering and pain on others.(1975:167) The ideal, often found in the corporate church, is of a life without suffering and of easy believism. However, the dividends that are paid with such a view can cause Christians to think of themselves as powerless in helping those who are in the midst of suffering throughout the world. The temptation is most often to focus their vision inward on their own congregation's need. Many churches feel helpless to meet the world's need and thus limit their missiological vision to those nearest to the church community.

Moltmann warns Christians to remember that "Humanity only has a future if it looks to a common future."(ibid.) Each church will thus have to be responsible for the totality of humanity and make every effort to meet human need and spiritual need as far as its resources

will allow. Beyond local resources, churches will need to link up with other churches to reach out to humanity and to the world.

Many churches will not be able to depend on the corporate model to furnish them with answers to the need for world mission. They will find increasing challenges to become more creative and more visionary in order to accomplish the goals of mission to the world. The priority of vision will thus have to be a world perspective, beginning at home and moving dynamically outward. John Jonsson has summed up the need by saying:

> As long as there are growing numbers of people in the world who do not have the opportunity of hearing about Jesus Christ, the vocation of each witnessing church must be multiplied and intensified. The fact that the majority of the world's population is poor means that the promises of God must be shared in the gospel. The fact that people are struggling for personal justice, human freedom, and spiritual liberation means that the hope of the kingdom of God must be promised to them. The fact that there are dropouts in societies calls for the proclamation of the One who gives fulness of life. The fact that people are seeking meaning in life means that we must heed the call of Jesus Christ to discipleship, service, and risk. The fact that there is so much nominal Christianity means that we must return to our first love. The fact that there is so much threat to our future global existence means that we are being called to be peacemakers, announcing the One who "makes all things new."(1998:80)

Jonsson's analysis sums up the challenge for Southern Baptist churches and indeed all churches to become kingdom oriented.

The movement toward a kingdom model should be an attractive one for Southern Baptists because they speak so often of the early church as their model for mission and evangelistic outreach. Southern Baptists, however, will need to discover the larger implications of the

kingdom of God concept. The kingdom of God must not be limited to a local church's worship, fellowship, ministry, or outreach. The local church must visualize itself as a part of the larger work of the kingdom and vital to the establishment of God's reign throughout the world.

John Fullenbach has pointed out that:

> There are 114 occurrences of *church* in the New Testament referring to the Christian community, but the word *church* occurs only twice on the lips of Jesus. Can we conclude from here that the central teaching of Jesus was the Kingdom while the church occupied no significant place in Jesus' thought? Did the early church substitute the church for the Kingdom because the parousia did not come? It would be dangerous in theology to measure everything by the range of the names applied to it. The word *church* may not appear often in Jesus' teaching, but the very concept of the messianic community intrinsically bound up with the Kingdom implies what is meant by the concept church.(1998:249)

Hence, Southern Baptists should recognize the large scope of the work of the kingdom and be willing to participate in its work with all churches on mission to the world. It is precisely because:

> the Kingdom of God and the Church are two key New Testament concepts, both are crucial for the understanding of God's plan for humanity. They are central to the fulfillment of his redemptive purpose. While the Church cannot be identified with the Kingdom, for the latter is a large and more comprehensive term, the two are nevertheless in such close correlation that they cannot be separated either. (Kuzmic 1986:49)

According to Fullenbach the kingdom is to be understood as all-embracing and a dynamic concept that signifies God's active rule over all reality.(1998:249) The present prevailing image of the church among many Christians, however, is that of corporate organized religion with by-laws, constitutions, and structures that narrowly define its

mission. Many view the church as an institution in the society which fulfills spiritual functions the way other institutions fulfill business, government, educational, or labor needs. It is therefore easy to understand how Christians have limited the scope of the church within the kingdom of God and how society in general has allotted religion a role in the culture that keeps its distance from the more inclusive aspects of human life.

The symbol, kingdom of God, offers the church "a horizon of transcendence that will save it from enclosing itself again and again in stifling structures."(Fullenbach 1998:252) The Southern Baptist Convention churches have enclosed themselves within the stifling structures of a corporate identity that has limited their mission vision. A recovery of understanding of the kingdom of God has the potential to create new images and visions of mission and evangelization to the world.

For many churches in decline, a kingdom vision offers the only hope to renewal and growth. For churches in transitional areas, new visions of unreached peoples can become a reality. For churches content with their weekly worship routines, the kingdom vision can create a healthy discontent that there is much more that needs to be accomplished. Hence, a kingdom model for churches will produce the promise of a praxis of mission and evangelism that has the potential to fulfill the call of God upon each messianic community.

10.3 The Praxis of a Kingdom Model for Mission.

Churches that choose to follow a kingdom model for mission and evangelism have the potential of developing a more wholistic approach. Within the praxis of mission kingdom churches will be less concerned with many of the barriers that keep churches from a vision of world mission. Within the evangelistic mandate churches will find themselves closer to a New Testament model of evangelization which, according to Mortimer Arias, moves away from evangelistic formulas and minitheologies and toward apostolic proclamation and in keeping with Jesus' wholistic method: teaching, preaching, and healing.(1984:1-3)

The kingdom model offers three possibilities of praxis in mission for local churches: the recovery of word and sacrament; the opportunity to offer the church's own life to the world; and a model for society as a whole to follow.(Fullenbach 1998:270)

The church on mission today should be about proclaiming in word and deed that the kingdom of God has come in the person of Jesus Christ.(ibid.) The culture has apparently only overheard the gospel. Many seem to have never truly heard it. The kingdom church should, therefore, not be about the business of moralizing the gospel, but announcing it. Mortimer Arias quotes Gabriel Fackre saying that in order to get the gospel out of the church, the story must first be told in all its fullness.(1984:70) This is especially important because as Fackre says ". . . the world is aggressively telling its own tale."(1978:12) Such half-truths and fictions told by the world must be set straight by the good news of the gospel.

When Christians truly perceive the kingdom of God as good news and the church as an instrument in the telling of the story the potential for evangelism becomes clear. The power of the witness is in the story. It is not in manipulation of evangelistic formulas or strategies built around it. It is to be found in everyday lives that communicate the story they celebrate each Sunday.

The importance of the story of the gospel was summed up in a World Council of Churches meeting in Melbourne in 1980:

> The proclamation of the word of God is one such witness, distinct and indispensable. The story of God in Christ is the heart of all evangelism, and this story has to be told, for the life of the present church never fully reveals the love and holiness and power of God in Christ. The telling of the story is an inescapable mandate for the whole church; word accompanies deed as the kingdom throws its light ahead of its arrival and men and women seek to live in that light.(WCC 1980:93)

Arias has indicated that it was because the story was good news that it was remembered, told and re-told, written and passed on.(1984:70) If the gospel is to become alive in the culture, it must first become alive through story within the churches. Kingdom churches on mission open themselves up to the world and have greater opportunities for telling the story. As Schillebeeckx explains:

> The Church is not the Kingdom of God, but it bears symbolic witness to the Kingdom through its word and sacrament, and its praxis effectively anticipates that Kingdom. It does so by doing for men and women here and now, in new situations (different from those in Jesus' time), what Jesus did in his time: raising them up for the coming Kingdom of God, opening up communication among them, caring for the poor and outcast, establishing communal ties within the household of faith and serving all men and women in solidarity.(1990:157)

As the church recovers the power of the story of the kingdom of God and of the gospel its proclaimed word has the potential of taking on new life and its sacrament new meaning as the church reaches out to the world to include them in the story.

A second possibility for the kingdom church is that it has the opportunity to offer the possibilities of its own life to the world. The kingdom model constantly holds up before the church the images of the kingdom of God where justice, peace, freedom, respect for all persons, and redemption are key components.

The practical nature of the kingdom model emphasizes to the communities around the church that the messianic community has embraced for itself such images and that they are practiced within the community of faith. The issues of daily life are brought into redemptive focus and are made concrete by a kingdom community that chooses to practice peace, to call for justice, to honor all people, and to seek salvation. As Gerhard Lohfink illustrates ". . . the church should offer itself as a "contrast society" to society at large."(1985:150) Churches that delegate through corporate agencies the issues of justice, ministry to need, human rights, and evangelistic outreach will be unable to offer themselves in authentic ways to the communities around them. Postmodern persons in the larger society are not easily impressed with corporate attempts to meet human need. Churches, however, who are willing to give their lives for the sake of the issues at the heart of the kingdom of God are more likely to gain the attention of persons in the larger culture.

The third possibility of the kingdom model for the church is that it has the potential to challenge society with its unique message in ways the corporate church cannot. Since the ultimate goal of the kingdom is the transformation of the whole of creation, the church must ". . . understand its mission in the service of the imminent Kingdom."(Fullenbach 1998:270)

Each church that follows the kingdom model will decide for itself appropriate ways to challenge the culture around it and thus properly contextualize its message. The corporate church depends upon agencies far removed from the local context to furnish it with a vision, strategies, and materials for outreach. As has been stated in this thesis such an approach cannot be properly contextualized. No community is like another. Human needs vary. The way people groups process information is often culturally unique and demographic shifts make it impossible to assume that persons in the churches are like those in the larger society. If the church's message is to properly challenge society as a whole it will require that each church fashion for itself the vision given to them by the Creator for their local context and for the world.

These three possibilities function together for the sake of mission and evangelization. The kingdom model for the church does not allow for the dichotomization between ministry, mission and evangelism as does the corporate, rather, the complex mission of the church is fully realized as the church understands itself participating in the

kingdom. Such threefold mission finds its expression among Catholic authors in *Redemptoris Missio*:

> The Church is effectively and concretely at the service of the Kingdom. This is seen especially in her preaching, which is a call to conversion. Preaching constitutes the Church's first and fundamental way of serving the coming of the Kingdom in individuals and in human society . . . .
>
> The Church, then, serves the Kingdom by establishing communities and founding new particular Churches and by guiding them to mature faith and charity in openness toward others, in service to individuals and society, and in understanding and esteem for human institutions.
>
> The Church serves the Kingdom by spreading throughout the world the "Gospel values" which are an expression of the Kingdom and which help people to accept God's plan. It is true that the inchoate reality of the Kingdom can also be found beyond the confines of the Church among peoples everywhere to the extent that they live "Gospel values" and are open to the working of the Spirit, who breathes when and where he wills.(Fullenbach 1998:271)

The kingdom model is not a perfect model and must always view itself as a preliminary anticipation of the Kingdom.(ibid.) Yet, the kingdom model has the best opportunity to challenge the church to actually participate in the kingdom of God and to allow the church to break away from a corporate identity that may not fully challenge its understanding of mission and that may dilute it or delegate it away from the church.

Howard Snyder adequately sums up the practical nature of the kingdom model in five ways:

> 1. Kingdom consciousness means living and working in the firm hope of the final triumph of God's reign. In the face of contrary evidence Kingdom Christians hold on to the conviction that God will eventually swallow up all evil, hate, and injustice. It is the firm belief that the leaven of the Kingdom is already at work in the dough of creation to use Jesus' own parable. This gives

> Christians an unworldly, audacious confidence that enables them to go right on doing what others say is impossible or futile.
>
> 2. Understanding God's Kingdom means that the line between sacred and secular does not exist in concrete reality. God's Kingdom means that all things are in the sphere of God's sovereignty, and therefore, of God's concern. All spheres of life are Kingdom topics.
>
> 3. Kingdom awareness means that ministry is much broader than church work. Christians who understand the meaning of God's Reign know they are in the Kingdom business, not the church business. They see all activity as ultimately having Kingdom significance.
>
> 4. In Kingdom perspective, concern for justice and concrete commitment to the word of God are necessarily held together. An awareness of God's Kingdom, biblically understood, resolves the tension between the two vital concerns. Those committed to the Kingdom want to win people to personal faith in Jesus Christ, for the Kingdom is ultimately the longing of every human heart. They are also committed to peace, justice, and righteousness at every level of society because the Kingdom includes "all things in heaven and on earth"(Eph 1:10) and the welfare of every person and everything God has made.
>
> 5. The reality of the Kingdom of God can be experienced now through the Spirit who gives the believer the first fruits of the fullness of the Kingdom in the here and now. Particularly in their liturgy Kingdom people anticipate the joy of the Kingdom. The different charisms given by the Holy Spirit witness concretely to the Kingdom present and are appreciated by all as clear manifestations of the powerful presence of the Kingdom in the midst of their daily life.(1991:154-155)

Each of the five observations made by Snyder are critical in the understanding of the kingdom church. As they merge together they help to fashion a vision for the church that allows its mission to flourish and to fully participate in God's salvific intention for the whole of humanity.

10.4 The Kingdom Model As Hope For Wholism in Mission.

The evangelical focus of Southern Baptists has historically fueled the mission advance of their churches and agencies. Southern Baptists have reflected the opinion of modern day church growth advocates such as Peter Wagner regarding the mission of the church. Wagner, in an essay entitled, *On the Cutting Edge of Mission Strategy*, has stated that the definition of mission is debatable but that it revolves around the relationship of the cultural mandate and the evangelistic mandate.(1992:45) Wagner's opinion is that both the cultural and evangelistic mandate are essential parts of biblical mission; neither being optional. His conclusion, however, is that evangelism is the highest priority.(:46-47) As has been shown earlier in this thesis, the underlying purpose of all that drives Southern Baptist mission efforts is evangelism.

David Bosch approximates more correctly what mission is about by saying:

> Mission refers to *Missio Dei* (God's mission), that is, God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God's involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate. *Missio Dei* enunciates the good news that God is a God-for-people.(1991:10)

Whereas Wagner defines mission largely as an outreach or evangelical activity of the church, Bosch's approximations of mission are much more wholistic and emphasize God's mission in which the church is privileged to participate. Southern Baptists being much closer to Wagner than

Bosch find themselves with a dichotomized view and approach to mission. It is one that is unfavorable to a wholistic kingdom model called for in this thesis but entirely favorable to a corporate approach where mission can be easily separated into missions, evangelism, and ministry functions.

A further problem is that dichotomized evangelical approaches to mission do not adequately take into account John Jonsson's concern that evangelism be properly defined as the whole gospel for the whole person in the whole of society as noted earlier in this thesis. Evangelicals who reject conciliatory approaches to the holism of mission strategy miss the importance of bringing into the full context of human life the word of God that touches every aspect of human experience.

Bosch can inform Southern Baptists and help them understand that the missionary ventures of the church, properly called missions ". . . refers to particular forms, and related to specific times, places, or needs, of participation in *Missio Dei.*"(ibid.) Focusing on missionary ventures with an exclusivistic evangelistic passion often leads Southern Baptists in directions that ignore the larger realities of *Missio Dei.*

If Southern Baptists are to move to a kingdom model which promises a more wholistic approach to mission they will have to commit themselves, in the words of David Bosch to be:

> service to the *Missio Dei*, representing God in and over against the world, pointing to God, holding up the God-child before the eyes of the world in a ceaseless celebration of the Feast of the Epiphany. (ibid.)

Such a wholistic approach will be critical to the shift needed to move Southern Baptists to the kingdom church model. The kingdom church fully embraces the *Missio Dei* and participates fully in it representing God to the world in the fullest expression of God's word.

10.5 A View of the Kingdom Church for Southern Baptists.

Throughout this thesis research has sought to illustrate the variety of challenges to the current paradigm of Southern Baptists' mission approach. The remainder of this chapter will suggest how the needed paradigm shift toward the kingdom model for mission could function. There are five critical components to the kingdom model for mission that Southern Baptist churches must realize and that will comprise a major paradigm shift in the contextualization of mission for them.

10.6 Component One: Immersed in Mission.

The first component in the kingdom model suggests that churches will need to become fully immersed in mission. This is vital, as Paul Knitter has said, because ". . . if the mission of Jesus was the Kingdom of God, it cannot be otherwise for the mission of the church."(1996:108) In order to accomplish such immersion Southern Baptist churches must distance themselves from the corporate model of mission that has been so familiar. National agencies must move beyond Enlightenment thinking toward a more postmodern and catalytic approach. Mission sending agencies such as the International Mission Board and

the North American Mission Board should focus their energies not upon exclusive appointment of missionaries but upon advocacy functions, training functions, and research. They should function to help build a climate and vision for mission on foreign fields and at home. Agencies should not be charged with setting standards for those who wish to go on mission, but should be an additional resource to missionaries commissioned and sent by local churches.

As long as the mission sending agencies are seen as placement organizations for career missionaries local churches will continue to be limited in their mission vision. Few persons in comparison to the total membership of the Southern Baptist Convention properly visualize themselves as being on mission with God. Emphasis should be focused away from the mission sending agencies and toward the local churches in the commissioning and preparation of missionaries.

A kingdom model would suggest a partnership between existing mission agencies and local churches. Local churches should determine under the leadership of God who will serve on mission. Local churches should be helped by the mission agencies to learn about potential mission fields and priority needs at home and abroad. Churches that cannot adequately fund missionaries could be funded by the mission agencies out of mission endowments. Mission sending agencies will still be needed for support and language training, for example. Every effort, however, should be made to place the vision for mission within the local church and to furnish that local church with resources,

training, and support for church members who wish to work in foreign lands and at home.

10.7 Component Two: Salt, Light, and Context.

A second component concerns the evangelistic thrust of the local churches. Kingdom churches will take seriously their role as witnesses within the culture but will be careful to understand the context of the culture and how to properly communicate the good news. Alfred Krass has suggested that the kind of evangelism that is needed is contextual evangelism, one that is ". . . alert to the current historical and cultural moment in each place where the church is called to witness."(1978:85) Evangelism programs should not be developed by national agencies and merely handed to the churches for implementation. Kingdom churches should instead focus on their witness according to the Biblical metaphors of salt and light within the context of their own communities. They should be willing to add the flavor of the gospel to the daily dialogue of the culture thereby enhancing the human experience of God. Kingdom churches should also be light expressing the hope of the gospel in ways that challenge the darkness of the culture's misunderstandings of God.

National agencies concerned with evangelism should seek to help church members express the story of their faith and to find entry points to the culture that they might otherwise overlook. Churches should be able to utilize consultative resources that could be provided by national agencies and evangelistic leadership within the Convention.

Churches who seem to have difficulty in understanding their cultural context, for example, should seek the help of specialists who can spend time on the local church field. Agency leaders could work with the local church to properly contextualize evangelistic activities within the communities surrounding the church. Demographic research data could be provided to churches in the form of community studies conducted by national agencies. Local associations of churches could benefit as national leaders help analyze data for the churches.

Specialists should seek to help the church be wholistic in its outreach by addressing every aspect of human need within the mandate of the gospel. Churches desiring to become kingdom oriented should be helped by specialists to properly contextualize their total ministry efforts within communities. Above all, the specialists should help lead the local church to discover God's vision for its ministry and suggest ways that the vision of the church can be implemented within the community.

10.8 Component Three: A Ministry-based Mind Set.

A third characteristic of a kingdom church is a ministry-based approach to the whole of its mission. The passion of Southern Baptists for the communication of the gospel can be best realized through a ministry-based approach.

Southern Baptists must abandon the propositional approach to evangelism which Knight says ". . . misconstrues personal revelation and misunderstands the relation of language and truth."(1997:92)

Postmodern persons are reluctant to accept propositions historically used in a modern form of evangelistic presentation. The message of the gospel has its best chance of being heard as it is ministered within the context of the human story.

Each member of the church should be taught the importance of ministry and that they are called to ministry. Pastors should not exercise exclusive rites over baptism and other ordinances of the church. Laypersons should work alongside ministers as the gospel is demonstrated in word and deed. Ministers should serve as mentors of laypersons and teach skills of ministry.

An ethos of ministry needs to permeate the kingdom church. Krass has said "To be personally attached to Jesus is thus to understand oneself as called to the same servant ministry as he was."(1978:127) Every opportunity to meet human need and to address the human situation should include the story of the kingdom of Christ and his gospel. Ministry should not be focused exclusively on those who are needy but should be practiced toward all persons. Every person with whom a kingdom church member comes into contact must be viewed as one whom God loves and toward whom the church wishes to demonstrate care.

Ministry should not be used as a license for the proclamation of the evangel rather the gospel should be viewed as woven within the total fabric of the kingdom church's ministry. Ministry should expand its focus to every issue within the human experience. Social justice concerns, ecological issues, health concerns, the need for reconciliation, and peace are part of the kingdom church's outreach.

A ministry-based mind set will focus the kingdom church's attention on the world. Its reason for being will reflect the concern of Jesus that all persons might have life in abundance. The kingdom church will focus its energy, its resources, and its attention toward the demonstration of abundant life in Jesus Christ for all humankind.

10.9 Component Four: An Inclusive Spiritual House.

A fourth characteristic of the kingdom church will be culturally inclusive worship opportunities. The household of God (Eph. 2:19), the family of faith (Gal. 6:10), the dwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16), and numerous other images are used throughout Scripture to invite persons to encounter God. The fundamentally social character of God's temple, according to John Driver, means that relationships are important. (1997:188) The kingdom church will invest in relationships that are open and invitational to all who wish to worship God.

The kingdom church will understand the reality of pre-Christian seekers who are interested in spirituality but who are not necessarily well informed about Christianity. George Hunter, III, reminds that many pre-Christian persons ". . . have little or no experience of church."(1996:20) The kingdom church will, therefore, not establish pre-requisites about worship or spiritual exploration for those in the general community. Instead the image of the messianic banquet will dominate. All will be invited to explore the spiritual feast.

The kingdom church will be sensitive to those who do not "know the rules" of worship. Educational opportunities will be made available

for persons who wish to know more or to "test the waters" before they commit to church participation or membership. The emphasis of the kingdom church will be upon invitation and not upon recruitment of persons.

Kingdom churches do not feel a need to adhere to denominational labels in order to define themselves. They define themselves in terms of distinctives, such as believer's baptism, but offer persons opportunities to explore the distinctives for themselves. Emphasis is not upon numbers in the kingdom church, but upon the worship and knowledge of God.

10.10 Component Five: Commitment to the Family of God.

The kingdom church model suggests a commitment to the concept of the family of God. Christians are not isolated by denomination but are embraced in the household of faith. The kingdom church is ecumenical in its vision, outreach to communities, ministry involvement, mission advance, and concern for the world. The kingdom church should be eager to work with all Christians for the sake of the gospel. The primary reason, according to Knitter, is that the focus of the church's mission is that of ". . . building up the Kingdom of God and building up the Church to be at the service of the Kingdom."(1996:109)

The isolation that has existed in Christendom brought about by denominational differences must be broken down if mission is to advance. If the world is to encounter the living Christ it cannot

witness divisions in Christ's body, the church. Every attempt should be made to foster openness and dialogue between faith groups.

The kingdom church should be an advocate of willing participation with any church community called to mission. In doing so it recognizes that the kingdom of God is broader than any denomination, church, or Christian group. Sharing of resources, information, and expertise should be a natural expression of the kingdom church so that the kingdom can benefit from all sources. Knitter insists that the church is called to a twofold service: one is to witness to the kingdom and to promote the realization of the kingdom of God in the world. The second service is to proclaim Jesus Christ and to build up a community of faith as disciples.(ibid.)

As Christians embrace the concept of the family of God in the ecumenical sense they soon discover that the mystery of God is at work everywhere. The wholeness of the kingdom is strengthened and fellowship is enhanced as churches work together for the sake of the kingdom. According to Knitter, "In a Kingdom-centered mission theology, Christians are better able to keep their priorities straight."(ibid.)

10.11 Conclusion.

In any research based study the possibility exists for many more findings as new works constantly emerge. While the five components of a kingdom church are not exhaustive, they do represent for Southern

Baptists a marked paradigm shift and do take into account the challenges to the mission of Southern Baptists outlined in this thesis.

The use of the term, "kingdom church" will continue to be a challenge to the Southern Baptist Convention. The term must not be misunderstood. It does not refer to a Christendom model nor does it refer to the development of a monolithic hierarchy of religious systems. The New Testament writers constantly portray Jesus as a pivotal figure who redirects the understandings of his followers from their captive concept of the coming kingdom to a cosmically extended assertion of the reign of God.(Poe 1996:185) Such redirection will be the constant challenge of Southern Baptists' understanding of the kingdom oriented church.

The kingdom model implies participation with God as God's kingdom is made known on the earth. Every realm of human experience, physical and spiritual is touched by the kingdom concept. The reality of the kingdom of God opens the door to life in the kingdom and extends the kingdom through the participation and witness of all believers in God's mission.(ibid.)

Southern Baptists are not used to thinking along kingdom lines. They are more at home with denominational identity. Yet, the challenge to shift to a kingdom church model as the basis for their mission is crucial to their survival as a denomination given the uncertain direction of their mission programs, aging membership, and the realities of post-denominationalism. The kingdom church model offers

new hope because of the fundamental character of kingdom people. As David Bosch so aptly explains in his quote of Snyder:

> Kingdom people seek first the Kingdom of God and its justice; church people often put the church work above concerns of justice, mercy, and truth. Church people think about how to get people into the church; Kingdom people think about how to get the church into the world. Church people worry that the world might change the church; Kingdom people work to see the church change the world.(1991:378)

Kingdom people are eager to participate in the *Missio Dei*. They realize that "The *Missio Dei* purifies the church. It sets it under the cross--the only place where it is ever safe."(Bosch 1991:519)

Interviews

1986. J. Edwin Orr, interview by author, personal conversation, Amsterdam. May 1986

1989. Dan McMillian, McMillian Publishing Group, interview by author, personal conversation, Boston, MA., October 1989.

1996. George G. Hunter, III, interview by author, personal conversation, Louisville, KY., October 1996.

1996. Kirk Hadaway and Penny Marler, paper delivered on the "Problem of Drop-outs in American Religious Life", Louisville, KY., October 1996.

1997. Jimmy Carter, convocation speech given at Mercer University, Atlanta, GA., August 1997.

1997. Ralph Neighbor, Jr., interview by author, personal conversation, Kansas City, MO., December 1997.

1997. Lesslie Newbigin, interview by author, personal conversation, Birmingham, AL., November 1997.

1998. John N. Jonsson, correspondence, Waco, TX., August 1998.

1998. Jim Dennison, interview by author, personal conversation, Atlanta, GA., July 1998.

1998. Phil Jones, interview by author, personal conversation, Atlanta, GA., July 1998.

1998. Shuford Jones, interview by author, personal conversation, Atlanta, GA., August 1998.

1998. Buddy Parrish, interview by author, personal conversation, Grayson, GA., May 1998.

1998. R. Keith Parks, interview by author, personal conversation, Atlanta, GA., October 1998.

Reports, Occasional Papers, Newspapers

1845. *The Religious Herald.* (Virginia Baptist paper.) March 13,1845.

1845. *The Religious Herald.* (Virginia Baptist paper.) April 10, 1845.

1845. *Proceedings of the Southern Baptist Convention.* (SBC Annual) June 1845.

1846. *Minutes, First Triennial Meeting SBC*

1846. *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal,* 1, No.1, June 1846

1849. *Proceedings of the Southern Baptist Convention.* (SBC Annual) June 1849.

1855. *Home and Foreign Journal.* V. No. 1, July 1855

1922. *The Search Light.* December 29, 1922.

1958. *History: Sandy Creek 1858-1958.*

1970-1997. *Proceedings of the Southern Baptist Convention.* (SBC Annuals), June 1970-1997.

1980. *Your Kingdom Come.* Geneva: WCC.

1984. *Personal Reflections on the Mission Dialogue in Richmond.* (Occasional Paper). Richmond, VA., May 15-16 1984.

1986. *Church Base Design.* (Unpublished Interagency Document), SBC.

1986. *The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church.* Revised 2nd ed. Johannesburg: ICT.

1987. *Consultation on Cooperation and Partnership between Nationals and Missionaries in Africa.* Baptist World Alliance.

1992. "What's Southern?" *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution,* February 16, 1992

1992. *"Quality in Southern Baptist Pastoral Ministry",* A Project Funded by the Lilly Foundation. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1992

1993. *Evangelism Index.* (Unpublished Report). Atlanta: Home Mission Board. March 1993.

1995. "America's Heartland Turns to Hot Location for Melting Pot." *The Wall Street Journal, October* 31 1995.

1997. *Minutes of the 176th Annual Meeting.* Georgia Baptist Convention. Atlanta, GA., June 1997.

1997. *Reuters News Service.* August 10, 1997.

1997. *North American Mission Board Facts.* (Occasional Paper). Atlanta, GA.,

1998. Internet Web Site: HTTP://WWW.WSU.EDU

1998. "Charting Our Course by the Unchanging Christ." Thomas D. Elliff. (Unpublished Paper).

1998. *The Christian Index.* Georgia Baptist Convention: Atlanta, GA., January 1998.

1998. *Exalting The Unchanging Christ.* (1998 Book of Reports). Southern Baptist Convention Minutes, June 1998.

1998. *Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Catalogue 1998-2000.* Kansas City

1998. "Mission Impossible?" *The Alabama Baptist*, February 12, 1998.

Periodicals

Blackwelder, Oscar F 1948. "The Church In Our Time." *Theology Today*, (Vol.5), 156-157.

Bosch, David J 1989. "Mission in Jesus' Way: A Perspective from Luke's Gospel." *Missionalia.* (Vol.17), 3-21.

Bradley, Martin 1990. "Churches and Church Membership in the United States, 1990." *Glenmary Research,* 2-20.

Castro, Emilio 1995. "On Evangelism and Culture: Some Reflections." *International Review of Missions.* (Vol. 84), 335.

Deardorff, Kevin E and Patricia Montgomery 1998. "National Population Trends." *U.S. Census Bureau Report,* 1-4.

Fleming, Dean 1995. "The Third Horizon: A Wesleyan Contribution to the Contextualization Debate." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (Vol. 30), 2.

Geffre, Claude 1995. "Christianity and Culture." *International Review of Missions.* (Vol. 84), 332-333.

Greenberg, Irving 1978. "From Modernity to Post-Modernity: Community and the Revitalization of Traditional Religion." *Religious Education,* (Vol.73), 449-469

Hiebert, Paul G 1987. "Critical Contextualization." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research.* July 1987, 104-112.

Johnson, Kenneth M and Calvin L. Beale 1995. "The Rural Rebound." *American Demographics*. July, 1-5.

Jonsson, John N 1983. "An Elliptical Understanding of Mission and its Roles." *Missionalia*. (Vol.11), 3-10

Küng, Hans 1988. "The Reemergence of the Sacred: Transmitting Religious Traditions in a Postmodern World." *Conservative Judaism*. (Vol.40), 8-19.

Mesmer, Michael W 1985. "Making Sense of/with Postmodernism." *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. (Vol.68), 404-426.

Myers, Bryant L 1998. "What Makes Development Christian? Recovering from the Impact of Modernity." *Missiology: An International Review*. (Vol. 26), 143-153.

Peterson, Eugene 1993. "Spirit Quest." *Christianity Today*. (November 8), 26-30.

Rosado, Caleb 1988. "The Nature of Society and the Challenge to the Mission of the Church." *International Review of Mission*. (Vol. 77), 22-37.

Saluter, Arlene F 1998. "Marital Status and Living Arrangements." *U.S. Census Bureau Report*, 1-3.

Shenk, Wilbert R 1991. "Missionary Encounter With Culture." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. (July), 104-109.

Standridge, Charles R 1964. "Courts Redford--Missions Leader." *Home Missions. (XXVIII*, August), 17.

Thomas, Norman E 1998. "Evangelism Trends in the World Council of Churches." *Journal of the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education*. (Vol. 13), 43-58.

Van Gelder, Craig 1991. "A Great New Fact of Our Day: America as Mission Field." *Missiology*. (Vol.19), 409-418.

_____1991. "Postmodernism as an Emerging Worldview." *Calvin Theological Journal*. (Vol. 26), 412-417.

Books

Abraham, William J 1989. *The Logic of Evangelism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Ahlstrom, Sydney E 1972. *A Religious History of the American People*. New Haven: Yale University.

Allen, Diogenes 1989. *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World.* Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.

Anderson, Walter Truett 1990. *Reality Isn't What It Used to Be: Theatrical Politics, Ready-to-Wear Religion, Global Myths, Primitive Chic, and Other Wonders of the Postmodern World.* San Francisco: Harper and Row.

Ariarajah, Wesley 1985. *The Bible and People of Other Faiths.* Geneva: WCC.

Arias, Mortimer 1984. *Announcing the Reign of God: Evangelization and the Subversive Memory of Jesus.* Philadelphia: Fortress.

Atkinson, Donald A and Charles L Roesel 1995. *Meeting Needs Sharing Christ.* Nashville: LifeWay.

Baker, Robert A 1966. *The Story of the Sunday School Board.* Nashville: Convention Press.

_____ 1974. *A History of the Southern Baptist Convention and Its People.* Nashville: Broadman.

Barker, Joel A 1992. *Paradigms. The Business of Discovering the Future.* San Francisco: Harper.

Barna, George 1990. *The Frog in the Kettle.* Ventura: Regal.

_____ 1995. *Evangelism that Works.* Ventura: Regal.

Barrett, David B 1987. *Evangelize!* Birmingham: New Hope.

_____ and James W Reapsome. 1988. *Seven Hundred Plans to Evangelize the World.* Birmingham: New Hope.

_____and Todd M Johnson 1990. *Our Globe and How To Reach It.* Birmingham: New Hope.

Baum, Gregory and Harold Wells 1997. *The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches.* Maryknoll: Orbis.

Bellah, Robert, et al., eds. 1985. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life.* Berkeley: University of California.

Blackaby, Henry and Claude King. 1990. *Experiencing God.* Nashville: Convention Press.

Bosch, David J 1991. *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission.* New York: Orbis.

Brackney, William H 1983. *Baptist Life and Thought*. Valley Forge: Judson.

Breech, James 1989. *Jesus and Postmodernism*. Minneapolis: Fortress.

Brueggemann, Walter 1993. *Biblical Perspectives on Evangelism. Living in a Three-Storied Universe*. Nashville: Abingdon.

Burnham, Frederic B 1989. *Postmodern Theology*. San Francisco: Harper.

Buttry, Daniel L 1994. *Christian Peacemaking: From Heritage to Hope*. Valley Forge: Judson.

Cahoone, Lawrence, ed. 1996. *From Modernism to Postmodernism*. Cambridge: Blackwell.

Callinicos, Alex 1990. *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique*. New York: St. Martins.

Carver, William Owen 1934. *The Course of Christian Missions*. New York: Fleming Revell.

Cassidy, Michael 1997. *The Small Beginnings of Reconciliation in Port Elizabeth*. Port Elizabeth: African Enterprise.

Chaney, Charles L 1976. *The Birth of Missions in America*. South Pasadena: William Carey Library.

_____and Ron S Lewis. 1977. *Design for Church Growth*. Nashville: Broadman.

Cobb, John B Jr 1997. *Reclaiming the Church: Where the Mainline Church Went Wrong and What to Do about it*. Westminster: Louisville.

Criswell, W A 1969. *Why I Preach that the Bible is Literally True*. Nashville: Broadman.

Culler, Jonathan 1982. *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. Ithaca: Cornell University.

Cunningham, Richard B 1988. *The Christian Faith and Its Contemporary Rivals*. Nashville: Broadman.

Dempsey, Ron D 1997. *Faith Outside the Walls: Why People Don't Come and Why the Church Must Listen*. Macon: Smyth & Helwys.

De Gruchy, John and C Villa-Vicencio 1994. *Doing Theology in Context. South African Perspectives*. Maryknoll: Orbis.

DeYoung, Curtiss Paul 1997. *Reconciliation: Our Greatest Challenge-- Our Only Hope.* Valley Forge: Judson.

Dockery, David S 1993. *Southern Baptists & American Evangelicals: The Conversation Continues.* Nashville: Broadman.

Dorrien, Gary 1998. *The Remaking of Evangelical Theology.* Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.

Driver, John 1997. *Images of the Church in Mission.* Scottdale: Herald.

Dyrness, William A 1990. *Learning About Theology From the Third World.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Eighmy, John Lee 1972. *Churches in Cultural Captivity.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee.

Erickson, Millard J 1998. *Postmodernizing the Faith.* Grand Rapids: Baker.

Estep, William R 1994. *Whole Gospel Whole World.* Nashville: Broadman.

Fackre, Gabriel 1978. *The Christian Story.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Fish, Stanley 1989. *Doing What Comes Naturally.* Durham: Duke University.

Fletcher, Jesse C 1994. *The Southern Baptist Convention: A Sesquicentennial History.* Nashville: Broadman and Holman.

Fuellenbach, John 1998. *The Kingdom of God. The Message of Jesus Today.* Maryknoll: Orbis.

Gallup, George 1984. *Religion in America.* Princeton: Princeton Religion Research Center.

Garrett, James Leo Jr, Hinson, E Glenn, Tull, James E 1983. *Are Southern Baptists Evangelicals?* Macon: Mercer University.

Gibbs, Eddie 1994. *In Name Only.* Wheaton: Bridgepoint.

Gill, Robin 1995. *Readings in Modern Theology.* Nashville: Abingdon.

Green, Michael 1970. *Evangelism in the Early Church.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Grenz, Stanley J 1996. *A Primer on Postmodernism.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Hadaway, C Kirk 1991. *Church Growth Principles.* Nashville: Broadman

_____ 1993. *Church and Denominational Growth.* Nashville: Abingdon.

Hadaway, C Kirk and David A Roozen 1995. *Rerouting the Protestant Mainstream: Sources of Growth & Opportunites for Change.* Abingdon: Nashville.

Hall, Douglas John 1997. *The End of Christendom and the Future of Christianity.* Harrisburg: Trinity.

Hamilton, W W 1921. *Bible Evangelism.* Home Mission Board: Atlanta.

Harkness, Georgia 1971. *The Ministry of Reconciliation.* Nashville: Abingdon.

Harvey, David 1989. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change.* Cambridge: Basil Blackwell.

Hauerwas, Stanley and William H Willimon 1992. *Resident Aliens. A Provocative Christian Assessment of Culture and Ministry for People Who Know That Something is Wrong.* Nashville: Abingdon.

Hendricks, William D 1993. *Exit Interviews.* Chicago: Moody.

Hengel, Martin and Anna Maria Schwemer 1997. *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch.* Louisville: John Knox.

Henry, Carl F H 1976. *God,Revelation, and Authority,* 6 vols. Waco: Word.

Henry, Carl F H 1988. *Twilight of a Great Civilization: The Drift Toward Neo-Paganism.* Westchester: Crossway.

Hiebert, Paul G 1994. *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues.* Grand Rapids: Baker.

Hill, Samuel S Jr and Robert G Torbet 1964. *Baptists: North and South.* Valley Forge: Judson.

_____ 1972. *Religion and the Solid South.* Nashville: Abingdon.

_____ 1980. *The South and the North in American Religion.* Athens: University of Georgia.

_____ ed 1983. *Religion in the Southern States.* Macon: Mercer University.

Hinson, E Glenn 1981. *The Evangelization of the Roman Empire.* Macon: Mercer University.

_____ 1996. *The Early Church.* Nashville: Abingdon.

Holland, Joe 1989. "The Postmodern Paradigm and Contemporary Catholicism." In *Varieties of Postmodern Theology.* Ed. David Ray Griffin, William A Beardslee, and Joe Holland. Albany: State University of New York.

Horsley, Richard A 1996. *Archaeology History and Society in Galilee.* Valley Forge: Trinity.

Hudson, Winthrop S and John Corrigan 1992. *Religion in America.* New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Hunsberger, George and Craig Van Gelder 1996. *Church: Between Gospel and Culture.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Hunter, George G III 1979. *The Contagious Congregation: Frontiers in Evangelism and Church Growth.* Nashville: Abingdon.

_____1987. *To Spread the Power. Church Growth in the Wesleyan Spirit.* Nashville: Abingdon.

_____ 1992. *How To Reach Secular People.* Nashville: Abingdon.

_____ 1996. *Church for the Unchurched.* Nashville: Abingdon.

Johnson, Ben C 1987. *Rethinking Evangelism: A Theological Approach.* Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.

Johnson, Ronald W 1994. *How Will They Hear If We Don't Listen?* Nashville: Broadman and Holman.

Jones, Phillip B et.al. 1993. *A Study of Adults Baptized in Southern Baptist Churches, 1993.* Atlanta: Home Mission Board.

Jonsson, John N 1987. *Crisis of Missions in the Bible.* Charlotte: Nilses.

_____1998. *Incarnation Mission Twenty One.* Charlotte: Nilses.

Kelley, Charles S Jr 1993. *How Did They Do It?* New Orleans: Insight.

Kew, Richard and Cyril Okorocha 1996. *Vision Bearers.* Harrisburg: Morehouse.

Klaas, Alan C 1996. *In Search of the Unchurched.* New York: Alban.

Knight, Henry H III 1997. *A Future for Truth.* Nashville: Abingdon.

Knitter, Paul F 1996. *Jesus and the Other Names.* Maryknoll: Orbis.

Koester, Helmut 1995. *History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age.* New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Kraft, Charles H 1981. *Christianity in Culture.* Maryknoll: Orbis.

Krass, Alfred C 1978. *Five Lanterns at Sundown. Evangelism in a Chastened Mood.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

_____ 1982. *Evangelizing Neopagan North America.* Scottdale: Herald.

Kraus, C Norman 1998. *An Intrusive Gospel?* Downers Grove: Intervarsity.

Kroeber, Alfred and Clyde Kluckhohn 1952. *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions.* New York: Vintage Books

Kuhn, Thomas S 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* Chicago: University of Chicago.

Kuzmic, Peter 1986. *The Church: God's Agent for Change.* Australia: Paternoster.

Larkin, William J and Joel F Williams 1998. *Mission in the New Testament.* Maryknoll: Orbis.

Latourette, Kenneth Scott 1970. *The First Five Centuries.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

_____ 1975. *A History of Christianity: Reformation to the Present.* New York: Harper and Row.

Lawrence, J B 1949. *Co-operating Southern Baptists.* Atlanta: Home Mission Board.

Leon, Arnold E 1985. *Secularization: Science without God?* London: SCM.

Leonard, Bill J 1990. *God's Last and Only Hope.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Lindsell, Harold 1970. *An Evangelical Theology of Missions.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Lingenfelter, Sherwood 1996. *Agents of Transformation. A Guide For Effective Cross-Cultural Ministry.* Grand Rapids: Baker.

Lochman, Jan Milic 1977. *Reconciliation and Liberation: Challenging a One-Dimensional View of Salvation.* Philadelphia: Fortress.

Lohfink, Gerhard 1985. *Jesus and Community.* London: SPCK.

Love, J F 1912. *The Mission of our Nation.* New York: Revell

Madison, Gary B 1990. *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity: Figures and Themes.* Bloomington: Indiana University.

Marsden, George M 1980. *Fundamentalism and American Culture.* Oxford: Oxford Press.

Maynard-Reid, Pedrito U 1997. *Complete Evangelism: The Luke-Acts Model.* Scottdale: Herald.

McBeth, H Leon 1987. *The Baptist Heritage.* Nashville: Broadman.

_____1990. *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage.* Nashville: Broadman.

McGavaran, Donald A 1980. *Understanding Church Growth.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

McGrath, Alister 1995. *Evangelicalism & the Future of Christianity.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity.

McKinney, Duane Elmer and Lois McKinney. 1996. *With an Eye on the Future.* Monrovia: MARC.

Meade, Loren B 1991. *The Once and Future Church: Reinventing The Congregation For A New Mission Frontier.* New York: Alban.

Miller, James B 1989. "The Emerging Postmodern World." *Postmodern Theology: Christian Faith in a Pluralist World.* San Francisco: Harper and Row.

Moltmann, Jurgen 1975. *The Church in the Power of the Spirit.* New York: Harper and Row.

_____ et.al. 1998. *A Passion for God's Reign.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Mosher, Steve 1947. *God's Power, Jesus' Faith, and World Mission.* Scottdale: Herald.

Nash, Robert N Jr 1997. *An 8-Track Church in a CD World.* Macon: Smyth and Helwys.

Newbigin, Lesslie 1978. *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

_____1986. *Foolishness to the Greeks.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

_____ 1989. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

_____1963. *Trinitarian Faith and Today's Mission.* Richmond: John Knox.

Noll, Mark A 1992. *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

_____1997. Turning Points. Grand Rapids: Baker.

Oden, Thomas 1992. *After Modernity...What? Agenda for Theology.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Okholm, Dennis L 1997. *The Gospel in Black & White: Theological Resources for Racial Reconciliation.* InterVarsity: Downers Grove.

Orr, J Edwin 1973. *The Flaming Tongue.* Chicago: Moody

Packer, J I 1958. *"Fundamentalism" and the Word of God.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Padilla, C René 1980. "The Unity of the Church and the Homogeneous Unit Principle" *Exploring Church Growth,* ed. Wilbert R. Shenk. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

_____ 1985. *Mission Between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Phillips, James M and Robert T Coote 1993. *Toward the 21st Century in Christian Mission.* Eerdmans: Grand Rapids.

Poe, Harry L 1996. *The Gospel and Its Meaning.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Pohl, Marny and Rudy Pohl 1998. *A Matter of the Heart. Healing Canada's Wounds. A Biblical Study of Righteousness in Nations.* Ontario: Essence.

Rainer, Thom S 1993. *The Book of Church Growth. History, Theology, and Principles.* Nashville: Broadman.

Reid-Maynard, Pedrito U 1997. *Complete Evangelism.* Scottdale: Herald.

Rosenau, Pauline M 1992. *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads, and Intrusions.* Princeton: Princeton University.

Roozen, David A and Kirk Hadaway. 1993. *Church & Denominational Growth.* Nashville: Abingdon.

Rutledge, Arthur B And William G Tanner 1969. *Mission to America.* Nashville: Broadman.

Sample, Tex 1990. *U.S. Lifestyles and Mainline Churches.* Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.

Sanneh, Lamin 1992. *Translating the Message.* New York: Orbis.

_____1996. *Religion and the Variety of Culture.* Pennsylvania: Trinity.

Sampson, Philip et.al. 1994. *Faith and Modernity.* Oxford: Regnum.

Saayman, Willem and Klippies Kritzinger 1996. *Mission in Bold Humility. David Bosch's Work Considered.* New York: Orbis.

Schaller, Lyle E 1987. *It's a Different World.* Nashville: Abingdon.

Scharpff, Paulus 1964. *History of Evangelism.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Scherer, James A and Stephen B Bevans 1992. *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 1.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.

Schreiter, Robert J 1986. *Constructing Local Theologies.* New York: Orbis.

_____1998. *The Ministry of Reconciliation.* Maryknoll: Orbis.

Schillebeeckx, Eduard 1990. *Church: The Human Story of God.* New York: Crossroad.

Senior, Donald and Carroll Stuhlmueller 1983. *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* Maryknoll: Orbis.

Shenk, Wilbert R 1993. *The Transfiguration of Mission. Biblical Theological and Historical Foundations.* Scottdale: Herald.

Smith, Huston 1989. *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind.* Wheaton: Theosophical.

Snyder, Howard A 1991. *Models of the Kingdom.* Nashville: Abingdon.

Baptist Churches. Atlanta: Home Mission Board.

Rosenau, Pauline M 1992. *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads, and Intrusions.* Princeton: Princeton University.

Roozen, David A and Kirk Hadaway. 1993. *Church & Denominational Growth.* Nashville: Abingdon.

Rutledge, Arthur B And William G Tanner 1969. *Mission to America.* Nashville: Broadman.

Sample, Tex 1990. *U.S. Lifestyles and Mainline Churches.* Louisville: Westminster/John Knox.

Sanneh, Lamin 1992. *Translating the Message.* New York: Orbis.

_____1996. *Religion and the Variety of Culture.* Pennsylvania: Trinity.

Sampson, Philip et.al. 1994. *Faith and Modernity.* Oxford: Regnum.

Saayman, Willem and Klippies Kritzinger 1996. *Mission in Bold Humility. David Bosch's Work Considered.* New York: Orbis.

Schaller, Lyle E 1987. *It's a Different World.* Nashville: Abingdon.

Scharpff, Paulus 1964. *History of Evangelism.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Scherer, James A and Stephen B Bevans 1992. *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 1.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.

Schreiter, Robert J 1986. *Constructing Local Theologies.* New York: Orbis.

_____1998. *The Ministry of Reconciliation.* Maryknoll: Orbis.

Schillebeeckx, Eduard 1990. *Church: The Human Story of God.* New York: Crossroad.

Senior, Donald and Carroll Stuhlmueller 1983. *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* Maryknoll: Orbis.

Shenk, Wilbert R 1993. *The Transfiguration of Mission. Biblical Theological and Historical Foundations.* Scottdale: Herald.

Smith, Huston 1989. *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind.* Wheaton: Theosophical.

Snyder, Howard A 1991. *Models of the Kingdom.* Nashville: Abingdon.

Southard, Samuel 1962. *Pastoral Evangelism*. Nashville: Broadman.

Starkes, M Thomas 1984. *God's Commissioned People*. Nashville: Broadman.

Stott, John R W 1975. *Christian Mission in the Modern World*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity.

Sullivan, James L 1974. *Rope of Sand with Strength of Steel*. Nashville: Convention.

Sweet, William Warren ,ed 1964. *Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists 1783-1830*. New York: Cooper Square.

Taber, Charles R 1991. *The World is Too Much With Us*. Macon: Mercer University Press.

Thomas, Norman E 1995. *Classic Texts in Mission & World Christianity*. Maryknoll: Orbis.

Torbet, Robert G 1963. *A History of The Baptists*. Valley Forge: Judson.

Van Rheenen, Gailyn 1996. *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Verkuyl, J 1978. *Contemporary Missiology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Verstraelen, F J et.al., 1995. *Missiology: An Ecumenical Introduction, Texts and Contexts of Global Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Volf, Miroslav 1996. *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. Abingdon: Nashville.

Wagner, C Peter 1979. *Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimensions of Church Growth in America*. Atlanta: John Knox.

_____1981. *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate*. San Francisco: Harper and Row..

Weatherspoon, J B 1958. *M. Theron Rankin, Apostle of Advance*. Nashville: Broadman Press.

Wells, David F 1994. *God in the Wasteland. The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Whitten, Stephen P 1991. *Evangelism and Baptism Rates in Southern Baptist Churches*. Atlanta: Home Mission Board.

Wilbanks, C E 1957. *What Hath God Wrought Through C.E. Matthews?* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Wink, Walter 1998. *When the Powers Fall.* Minneapolis: Fortress.

Winter, Ralph D and Steven C Hawthorne 1992. *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader.* Pasadena: William Carey Library.

Wright, Tim 1995. *Unfinished Evangelism. More Than Getting Them In the Door.* Minneapolis: Augsburg.

Wuthnow, Robert 1988. *The Restructuring of American Religion.* Princeton: Princeton.

_____1989. *The Struggle for America's Soul: Evangelicals, Liberals, and Secularism.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Young, Pamela Dickey 1995. *Christ in a Post-Christian World.* Minneapolis: Fortress.

Unpublished Dissertations

Bate, Stuart Clifton 1993. *Inculturation and Healing. A Missiological Investigation into the Coping-Healing Ministry in South African Christianity.* Unpublished Th.D thesis: UNISA.

Gosnell, Rick 1993. *The Postmodern Paradigm: Challenges to the Evangelistic Ministry of the Church.* Unpublished Ph.D thesis: UMI.

Johnson, Ronald W 1988. *An Evaluation of the Home Mission Board Programs of Evangelism in Local Churches.* Unpublished D.Min Research Project: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

VITA

RONALD WAYNE JOHNSON

Born: October 6, 1949
Newnan, Georgia

Wife: Janice Williams Johnson
Children: Amy Caroline Johnson Cofer
Matthew Blake Johnson
Kyle Davidson Johnson

Degrees:

- West Georgia College, B.A., 1971
- The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, M.Div., 1974
  Louisville, Kentucky
- The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, D.Min., 1988
  Louisville, Kentucky
- University of South Africa , D.Th., Pretoria Republic Of South Africa, 1999

Employment History:

- Pastor, Chaplin Fork Baptist Church
- Curriculum Editor, The Sunday School Board, SBC
  Nashville, Tennessee
- National Evangelism Consultant, Home Mission Board, SBC
  Atlanta, Georgia
- Curriculum Editor, Evangelism Section, Home Mission Board, SBC
  Atlanta, Georgia
- Associate Director D.Min Studies, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Louisville, Kentucky
- Director of Evangelism, The Georgia Baptist Convention
  Atlanta, Georgia

Currently:

The Arnall-Mann-Thomason Professor of Mission and Evangelism,
McAfee School of Theology at Mercer University, Atlanta, Georgia

Books Published:

- The Doctrine of Salvation, contributing author. Convention Press, Nashville: 1978
- Oikos: A Practical Approach to Family Evangelism
  Broadman Press, Nashville: 1982
- Evangelism for All the People of God
  Broadman Press, Nashville: 1990
- How Will They Hear If We Don't Listen
  Broadman Press, Nashville: 1994